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## Beijing hosts overseas Spring Festivals



Wang Hui, director of the Information Office of Beijing Municipality, and Zhang Keyuan, Chinese ambassador to Malta, walk the Spring Festival parade in Valletta, Malta. Spring Festival has become a "flagship brand" the country spreads at each international exchange. This year, Beijing hosted three celebrations in Belgium, Malta and Germany. After 10 years of advertising China around the world, delegation organizer Wang Hui and her group are working on a new question: What will make Beijing a "World City"?

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### HOT POT!

### CHINESE RESTAURANT



# Chinese voice concerns before parliament meeting

"Livelihood issues" are the people's top concerns as shown in online polls ahead of the annual parliamentary and political advisory sessions.

Netizens who voiced complaints online hope they will be heard by top leaders, national lawmakers and political advisors, who will soon gather in Beijing for the two sessions.

Pension, housing and health-care are among the top concerns, according to polls conducted by people.com.cn of the Party's flagship newspaper *People's Daily*, xinhuanet.com of Xinhua News Agency and cctv.com of the state-run TV network.

"Pension" received 25,508 votes at people.com.cn, followed by anti-corruption, housing price, income gap, employment and health care. "Pension" also ranked among the top five concerns on cctv.com.

Netizens called for the scrapping of the long-time "dual pension scheme," in which civil servants and other public employees were entitled to pensions several times the amount of citizens employed by nonpublic entities.

"The current pension scheme widens the wealth gap," a person posted on xinhuanet.com.

The amount of pension given to ordinary citizens was determined by one's monthly payment dedicated to their social security account before they retired, and is fixed to the average income.

Retirees of non-public entities get much less than their salary before retirement. But the amount of pension government employees get is almost the same as what they got before retirement, sometimes two or three times higher than that received by a factory worker.

On January 1, the government raised the pension payout for ordinary citizens by 10 percent, or 120 yuan per month. It was the sixth increase since 2005, but still falls far short of civil servants' earnings.

## Housing price

"Housing" was the top concern in the survey hosted by xinhuanet.com.

Traditionally, an apartment of one's own is a must-have for marriage, although the government has tried to encourage young people to rent before they buy.

Housing prices in large cities have soared the past several years, and the government has worked on plans to increase public rental housing and build more subsidized housing.

But a report from the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the top legislature, said construction of low-income housing was behind target, with only about 23 percent of the planned investment present at the end of last August.

According to the Beijing Municipal Statistics Bureau, the city's average annual income in 2008 was 44,715 yuan, while urban apartments were selling for 15,581 yuan per square meter.

An 80-square-meter apartment costs almost 1.25 million yuan, which would take a family of two wage-earners 30 years to purchase, not accounting for interest.

The past year saw a 24-percent increase in housing prices nationwide, according to a report from the real estate association of the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce earlier this month.

"Hi, Premier Wen, we hope you can help us. Houses are for the rich but not for ordinary people like us. Even in my hometown, a small city such as Shandong's Zibo, houses are too expensive for us. We hope the central government can address this problem," a post said on xinhuanet.com.

(Xinhua)

# Hainan rebuilds image after price gouging



Scared away by sudden high prices, many tourists camp on the beach.

CFP Photo

By Han Manman

The "whopping prices" of hotels in Hainan Province scared away many tourists this Spring Festival.

To restore its image, the provincial government said it plans to better regulate the market.

This Spring Festival was viewed by many tourist agencies, hotels and property agents in Hainan as a golden chance to attract investors to the island's real estate market.

Two months ago, the central government announced

plans to develop Hainan into an international tourist destination by 2020.

But hotel rates soared to an unbelievable level during the festival. Rooms at the Hilton Sanya Resort went for 11,138 yuan per night, and customers said the hiked prices did not bring any improvement in service.

Media reports said local tour agencies had booked thousands of hotel rooms and hoped to sell them to tourists at a premium.

But the unusually high prices

scared away budget-conscious tourists who opted to camp on the beach or in a family hotel.

Many tourists cancelled their trips and some returned home ahead of schedule.

"In the past, occupancy rates for Spring Festival holidays were more than 90 percent. But this year, the occupancy rate at high-end hotels in Sanya fell by 15 to 20 percent on average," said Xiao Baojun, who is in charge of Hainan Kang-Tai International Travel Service.

Would-be room scalpers



Parents line up at a Hangzhou kindergarden hoping to secure their childrens early education.

CFP Photo

# City kindergartens too few for kids

By Han Manman

Packing food, tents and quilts, thousands of Beijing parents started lining up to get their children registered for kindergarden.

Registration opens early next week, and experts said the city is facing a massive deficit of kindergartens.

Xu Qing, one resident, has been having trouble finding a spot for her 3-year-old daughter.

"It's hard to find a kindergarden for my kids. Nearly all the public institutes I looked at are overbooked," Xu said.

Xu said she fears increasing tuition fees, long registration queues and the long-distance commute that will be required if she gets her daughter into a class.

Some kindergartens select applicants through interviews with the parents due to a lack of openings, Xu said.

Her frustration is no surprise considering the situation.

According to statistics provided by the Beijing Municipal Commission of Education, 460,000 children were born in the capital in the last three years and 220,000 are now in kindergarden. If no new kindergartens are built in the near future, half of these children will be left with nowhere to go.

Duan Chengrong, a demographer at Renmin University, said the shortage is chiefly due to a recent baby boom.

To get an auspicious birthday for babies, many parents tried to give birth to their child in 2007—the year of the Golden Pig in the Chinese Zodiac. 2008

was another lucky year because of the Olympics.

He attributes the situation to three other main factors: the ever-growing migrant worker population, a drop in the number of non-profit nursery schools and the lack of government funding.

The problem is not limited to Beijing: the total number of babies born in China increased 20 million annually over the past four years. Demographers predict that the baby boom will continue for another three to five years.

Figures from the Ministry of Education indicate there are nearly 140,000 kindergartens across the country. Existing kindergartens can offer places to more than 26 million kids: half the waiting population.

Duan said the kindergarden problem sent a signal to the govof erment that it should adapt to its changing population.

"If the government had realized there was an upcoming baby boom earlier, it could have taken measures to deal with the lack of kindergartens," he said.

Beijing, a typical example of this national phenomenon, has vowed to take measures to cope with the problem.

The Beijing municipal government pledged to invest 30 million yuan to expand 30 public kindergartens, adding 12,000 places this year.

In the next three years, the city will establish and expand 118 nursery schools to leverage the strain on admissions.

Duan said primary schools have to brace for the baby boom's coming impact.

suffered huge losses. Haikou Civil Holiday, a local travel service, booked 1,000 hotel rooms in Sanya: 200 stayed vacant for a 1.5-million-yuan loss, said General Manager Jiang Yueqin.

Experts warned that price shift betrays an immature market: one that is near-sighted and will eventually kill the tourism industry and image of Hainan Province.

The government pledged to crack down on house speculators and pass laws to prohibit

price gouging, said Wu Kunxiong, deputy director general of the tourism department of Hainan Province.

New standards would affect travel agencies, catering services, hotels and guides. All travel information would be required to be made public.

"We'll try our best to turn the island into a civilized international tourism destination," Wei Liucheng, secretary of Hainan's CPC Provincial Committee said. "We can be responsible, but we need more time."

# Beijing guys hitchhike to girlfriend in Berlin

By Li Zhixin

Two Beijing guys spent three and a half months hitchhiking the 160,000 kilometers across 13 countries to see a girlfriend in Berlin, Germany.

They were picked up by 88 rides, including tricycles, tractors and horse-drawn carriages. The journey was dubbed "the most romantic hitchhike in history" by netizens.

Liu Chang, 34, a documentary film director, and Gu Yue, 30, a global traveler, planned two years ago to visit Gu's German girlfriend by hitchhiking. After mapping their route, they set out June 4, 2009.

They were first seen standing in the mists of Houhai thumbing for rides that June 8. Carrying super heavy bags, they convinced the visa officers of 12 countries they were "backpacking." With a passport full of visas, they hit the road with a bit of cash, credit cards, sleeping bags, a laptop, a camera and some clothes.

Trouble came as soon as they started for Hebei. They waited in vain for over an hour in Houhai, but nobody would stop to take them. Finally they got help from a driver who took them to the entrance of the highway leading to Hebei, where they continued to wait despite the rain. They were asked to leave by some maintenance workers, one of whom said, "Not many cars go to Berlin from here."

It was far more difficult than they imagined. From Beijing to Berlin, they were turned down by more than 1,000 drivers. Often they had to wait hours before getting a hitch.

"The longest we waited was for two days at roadside when going from Hungary to the Czech Republic. We waited till midnight the next day before we got a lift,"



Gu Yue and his girlfriend.

Photos provided by Liu Chang

Liu said.

"Countries like Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan don't have the custom and we couldn't speak their language," Gu said.

He had someone write a few cards in Russian: "We need to hitch ride to Germany from China," "Could you give us a ride?" and "Excuse us, we don't have money but we've got cigarette and smiles."

Liu said the more they hitched, the more they loved it.

Meeting so many people was the biggest reward: a financial officer who was fired during the financial crisis; an easy-going CEO who drove a limo; a drunk driver in Georgia who played "speed" live; and an old fisherman living by the Caspian Sea.

The funniest experience happened in northern Iraq, where they got on a tractor and rode for 2 or 3 kilometers to a smoky village. They realized that the tractor was rushing there to help put out the fire, and they were brought there along.

When the fire was under control, the two were treated to dinner in an Iraqi home.

"Many people who gave us a lift invited us to visit their home. So we had the chance to peer into strangers' lives," Liu said.

Liu said the journey left them a pleasant impression of people from all 12 foreign countries they went through, especially Turkey.

"When we were ready to pass Turkey at the end of June, 2009, The Uyghur revolt at home was peaking. Our friends and parents tried to persuade us to not enter Turkey, which they were sure was full of East Turkistan terrorists. But the people in Turkey were excellent, helpful and hospitable," he said.

Three and a half months later, they reached Berlin where Gu's girlfriend Ilka Seide, 32, lives.

"I followed the sunset for the last 3 months, because I knew Berlin was where the sun sets and that was where my beloved lived," Gu said.

"Next time you want to see me, take the plane," she replied.

Their journey was tagged "the best Valentine's Day gift" by netizens.

Gu Yuan and Seide are currently on vacation in Thailand.



Gu took to a ride. His trip took three months of hitchhiking.

## Vietnamese women victims of southern smugglers

By Li Zhixin

China is the largest destination for kidnapped Vietnamese women, the Vietnamese National Action Items Office said Monday. As many as 65 percent of Vietnamese women taken during the last six years were sent to China.

Many victims of the trafficking have been forced into prostitution, hard labor or sold as marriage partners to Chinese men.

The victims, primarily abducted in the country's northern provinces, were smuggled into China via border cities including Lang Son, Quang Ninh and Lao Cai.

Vietnamese Police found that the smugglers also send the women to Taiwan, Hong Kong and Malaysia, as well as other countries in Europe, Africa and the Americas, for travel, marriage and labor export.

The international community, especially Southeast Asian countries, must stand up to fight the abducting of Vietnamese women, many of whom are being taken into China, Vietnam News Agency said.

"China is the largest destination for trafficked Vietnamese women, but the situation has deep historical reasons and complex social causes," said Sun Xiaoying, researcher at the Guangxi Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

She said Vietnamese women have been abducted and trafficked into China since late Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), when France first began its military campaign in the country. The French turned Mong Cai, a southern Vietnam border city near Guangxi, into a den for human traffickers.

Trafficking disappeared after

the founding of New China in 1949, but it returned with a vengeance during the last three decades.

"Both China and Vietnam have a gender imbalance problem. The deaths of Vietnamese men during the Vietnam War (1961- 1975) left many women single or widowed. Many Chinese rural areas in the south have far more boys than girls, which has aggravated the demand for Vietnamese women," she said.

"The more the gender imbalance grows, the more demand there is for Vietnamese women," she said.

In several years' field study, she found that women trafficked into China during the 1980s to 1990s were mainly 30-40 years old. "Many had children in Vietnam or were retarded, but most of them have adapted well to life in China and the government gives them small provisions despite their lack

of legal residence," she said.

A huge bride market has formed in rural areas of Guangxi where Vietnamese women are sought after as diligent, tough and competent at learning Chinese.

The number of Vietnamese women marrying Chinese men increased rapidly in the 1990s. Some trafficked women introduced their friends to eligible Chinese men if they return home, some of Sun's sources said.

"But since the new millennium, many young and pretty Vietnamese women are being abducted to work as prostitutes in China," she said.

"Smugglers usually cheat the women by claiming they will help them find a job or a husband," said Yuan Guanrong, director of the Department of Public Security in Guangxi Province.

"In recent years, society has

become more stable and increasing development in Vietnam has made the women less enthusiastic about seeking men in China," Yuan said. "In response, smugglers have started abusing, drugging and raping the women until they submit to working as a prostitute."

Guangxi Police said the smugglers from both Vietnam and China are in collusion. They have a mature network from abducting, hiding, transporting to trafficking.

The Vietnamese smugglers provide women, and the Chinese smugglers hide them in cities like Pingxiang, Dongxing, Ningming and Longzhou while waiting for a chance to traffic them.

"Trafficking women across these borders is the third most prosperous illegal industry after drug smuggling and arms running," Yuan said.



# Leave or stay

## '80s generation may find future in hometowns

By He Jianwei

Last weekend was when workers returned to Beijing.

But many '80s children who chased their dreams in the big city for several years are now pondering whether their move to the capital was a smart one.

About 30 years ago, their parents went back to the cities and towns after a political movement sent them

all to the countryside. Today, a new generation is preparing to leave the big city for home, where development is behind.

Chinese media has dubbed it the "Escape From Bei Shang Guang," (Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou) suggesting the move is an unwilling one.

But those heading back to take care of their aging parents say it may be the only rational choice.



After workers returned to Beijing last weekend, many from the '80s generation were reconsidering their plans for life in Beijing.

CFP Photos

### Caring for parents

There was no post-holiday fatigue on the face of Tina Yang this week. She quickly finished her day's work and began to scan the web for job openings.

Yang, 27, the deputy managing editor of a national sports magazine, has one goal this year: to quit. She is hoping to find work in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province — her hometown.

Although she does not own her own home, she earns more than 6,000 yuan per month and shares a 70-square-meter flat with a friend on Third Ring Road.

"I have fulfilled part of my dreams in Beijing and it is time to go home now," she says.

When she graduated from Communication University of China in 2006 she had no hesitation about staying in the capital. "Two years later, the Olympics would be held here and I thought it was a great honor to participate in reporting on the Games," Yang says.

She worked as a journalist at the Olympic media center and quickly rose through the ranks to become deputy editor. But then her father fell ill.

After he was hospitalized twice in 2009, she is rethinking the decision to stay in the city.

Like her peers, Yang is an only child. "When I stayed at the hospital with my father, I sud-

denly realized my parents are getting old and it's time for me to take care of them," she says.

"While one's parents are alive, one should not travel to distant places" goes an old Confucian saying.

"It is still true in modern China," Yang says. "I didn't understand the meaning of this sentence in my early 20s. At that time, I dreamed of getting out of my hometown and seeing the world."

But going back was not her first choice. She hoped to move her parents to Beijing, but quickly realized it was implausible.

Firstly, she does not own a house, and her parents would

refuse to live in a rented home. "They think owning a house makes it home. But with how Beijing's housing costs are growing, I don't want to be a slave to my mortgage," she says.

She also realized they would be lonely. "They have friends and relatives in our hometown. Beijing is a strange city for them and they wouldn't know anybody except their daughter," she says.

So she chose to leave.

"Old people always accuse us of being selfish and having no sense of duty. They are so wrong. We take everything into consideration, and not only from our own point of view," she says.

### A rational decision

It is difficult to compile statistics of just how many young people are packing their bags.

According to an investigation on sohu.com, 82 percent of the 60,000 respondents supported "escaping" the city, but only 25 percent were sure of their plans.

The survey found over 50 percent cited the rocketing house prices as a key motivating factor.

It also found that 53 percent were relocating to a provincial capital, 24 percent were bound for a coastal city or provincial capitals, 24 percent to coastal cities and only 17 percent were going to their hometowns.

For researchers of urban development, the intellectual flow is a rational decision.

"Regional disparity not only exists between urban and rural areas, but also among cities. The flow of educated people back to these cities can help to balance out development," Li Guoqing, a researcher at the Institute of Urban Development and Environment of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said.

### No easier in minor cities

Liu Fang is not as fortunate as Yang. Liu's parents live in Loudi, a small city in Hunan Province about two hours from Changsha.

As a website editor, Liu has an average income in Beijing. After paying 1,000 yuan for rent and daily expenses, she sends her parents 2,000 yuan each month. "My life in Beijing isn't bad or good, but I always feel like an outsider in this city," she says.

Liu turns 30 this year and is still single. Her parents worry about her marriage prospects

and future. "This Spring Festival they asked me to come back and work in Changsha where it would be easier to stay in touch," she says.

But Liu is hesitating. With Beijing's housing prices already averaging 17,000 yuan per square meter, Liu can't see a future of home ownership here.

While prices in Changsha are much lower, the city is already averaging 5,000 yuan per square meter.

"Actually, nowhere matches my pocketbook. If I work in

Changsha, I still won't be able to buy a home," she says, because the city's pay is lower.

But she is more worried about job opportunities in Changsha. She is the editor of an international news website, and there is not much work for a 30-year-old female web editor in Changsha.

"Compared with my classmates who stayed in Changsha after graduation, I feel like a loser," she says. "Most of them have a house and a car."

One of her classmates received a birthday gift — a

200,000-yuan car — from her husband last year when she turned 30, Liu says with a tinge of bitterness.

Whether to stay or leave is a hard decision.

"If I leave this city, it does not mean I will escape any of my pressures here. And if I go back to Changsha, it seems I will be carrying even more psychological baggage," she says.

Before heading back to work, she asked her parents to give her two years to consider whether or not to relocate.

# Hackers in hairdressing school?

## Google hacking report greeted with ridicule in China

Western media is again ramping up attack on China over the Google hacking incident.

On February 18, the *New York Times* named Shanghai Jiaotong University and Lanxiang Vocational School in Shandong Province as sources of last December's cyber attacks on Google, Adobe and other companies that aimed to steal personal information.

Chinese netizens, however, jeered at the report.



A hairdressing student in Lanxiang Vocational School.

CFP Photo

## Hacking probe raises Lanxiang school's popularity

One school under investigation for alleged links to last year's cyber attacks on Google and other US companies has already reaped some benefit from the controversy: a surge of applicants.

Local media reported that Lanxiang Vocational School in Shandong has been flooded with calls from potential applicants

since reports surfaced that it was linked to the attacks.

"We have been receiving phone calls from all over the country, asking about our computer science program, which is one of the most popular programs in our school," said a professor who requested anonymity.

US law enforcement and intelligence officials are investi-

gating links between the cyber attacks and two Chinese schools: Lanxiang and Shanghai Jiaotong University, said a person familiar with the investigation. The development was initially reported by the *New York Times*. Google cited the attacks in its threat to halt operations in China last month.

While Jiaotong is one of the

country's most prestigious universities, Lanxiang was a little-known vocational school before it made headlines last week. Besides computer science, it also offers courses in cooking, auto repair and hairdressing, Xinhua News Agency reported.

Lanxiang has denied any link to the attacks.

(Bloomberg)

## Netizens ridicule report

"The report is sheer nonsense. Is it April Fools' Day?" netizen sdh13814021912 commented on the *tiyaya.cn* forum.

"A vocational school being used as camouflage for a military-sponsored hacker training camp. Am I reading a science fiction?" another netizen, azydn, said.

Many joked that the US report was giving Lanxiang free publicity,

helping it to gain international fame. "I believe more and more young Americans will soon come to study computer science in Lanxiang," netizen Guchen Cangren said.

"Computer science majors should go to Lanxiang for their master's degree," netizen Blacksaid on *renren.com*'s forum.

While netizens are making fun of the report, the unexpected spot-

light has troubled the schools.

"We don't want such fame because the report is groundless," Li Zixiang, party chief of Lanxiang, said.

Both the vocational school and Jiaotong University said the *New York Times* report was unfounded, and denied being behind the cyber attacks on Google and other US companies.

"We computer students do not have to demonstrate our talent through hacking attacks," said a student surnamed Xu at Jiaotong University's Department of Computer Science and Engineering.

"Hacking goes against the law, and we have been taught to abide by the law while gaining cyber knowledge and using the Internet," he said. (Agencies)

### Expert

## Newspaper report violates journalistic ethics

By Huang Daohen

While Western media claims to stand for fairness and objectivity in news reporting as well as freedom of speech, they have frequently violated journalistic ethics and professional codes of conduct, said Jia Lerong, a professor at the Communication University of China.

Jia said Western media operate based on the ideology of interest groups. She said there have been many scandals in the history of the *New York Times*, including one related to the Iraq war, when the *Times* reporter Jayson Blair made up and plagiarized news.

"In the Lanxiang case, the

story is very clearly flawed, both in terms of journalistic practice and professional conduct. They committed the old sin of establishing the theme first and then sieving for supporting evidence afterwards," Jia said.

Chinese reporters who are familiar with the local situation as well as the background of Lanxiang Vocational School would not have written such an amusing, fake news story, she said.

One of many large, privately-owned vocational schools in the country, Lanxiang mainly offers courses in cooking, hairdressing and auto repair, its website says. Its computer classes cover basic

word processing, spreadsheets and Photoshop. Like other vocational schools, Lanxiang relies heavily on TV advertising to attract students.

Jia said the *Times* report simply cited "anonymous sources close to the investigation." A subsequent *Guardian* article identified sources from the US National Security Agency (NSA).

"One would have thought that, having been led up the garden path on Iraq, journalists would no longer treat anonymous leaks from intelligence agents with such breathless credulity," the professor said. "But unfortunately, the quest for

an eye-catching headline often trumps doubts about a story."

The *New York Times* article was credited to John Markoff and David Barboza, with additional reports from Bao Beibei and Chen Xiaoduan in Shanghai.

A call made to the Shanghai bureau of the paper revealed that the Shanghai-based correspondent, Barboza, was out of the office.

"He said everything there is to say in that article," an unidentified office staff said. "As to why the details of the investigation were not published, it may be out of consideration to protect the news sources."

## Google to restart China talks

(AFP) – Google and Chinese officials will resume talks about whether the US firm can deliver unfiltered Internet search results in the world's most populous country, the *Wall Street Journal* reported Tuesday.

It was unclear whether any progress was being made in the talks.

Recent reports have quoted US analysts as saying they believe a Chinese freelance security consultant with government ties was the author of the code used in the hack attacks on Google and more than 30 other companies.

Google has continued to filter search results in China and remained tight-lipped regarding discussions with officials in that country.

Google representatives and Chinese officials were to resume talks in the coming days after a break for China's Lunar New Year holiday, according to the *Journal*.

A spokeswoman for Google China, Marsha Wang, told AFP that she did not have any update on plans for talks when asked about the report.

## Country braces for post-holiday travel rush

(AFP) – China is bracing for a massive travel rush as millions of people across the country started making their way home last Tuesday after spending the lunar new year holiday with their families.

The railways ministry said 3.5 million people travelled by train on Monday, up 54 percent from the day before, Xinhua News Agency reported.

People start to travel back home on the third day of the Lunar New Year, which fell on last Tuesday, and the ministry said it has asked local railways to brace for a post-holiday push and add more services if necessary.

Around 210 million passengers are expected to take trains during the new year travel period, which ends March 10. Nearly 30 million more will travel by air.

## 20 mln pollution-fighting fish released in lake

(AFP) – Authorities in the east said they will release 20 million algae-eating fish into one of the nation's most scenic lakes that has been ravaged by pollution.

Taihu Lake, which straddles Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces, has been severely polluted by sewage as well as industrial and agricultural waste, triggering a blue-green algae plague.

Authorities started using fish to try to clean up the lake in February last year when they released 10 million mostly green and silver carp into the water, after the algae tainted the drinking supply of millions of residents.

Over the next few days, around 20 million more algae-eating fish will be released into the water, the Taihu Lake Fisheries Management Committee said. The campaign is funded by the government and public donations.



# Saving for marriage

Report says pressure to mate drives high savings

By Huang Daohen

Why are Chinese people great savers?

The question has baffled economists for years: while Americans' household savings hover around zero, Chinese households have consistently saved 30 percent of their earnings.

To find answers, many have focused on the government's economic policies.

But Wei Shangjin, a financial professor at Columbia Business School, proposes a different explanation: women.



The one child policy and old traditions have resulted in a twisted birth ratio of 122 boys for every 100 girls.

Xinhua Photo

## Gender ratio theory

More brides would help reduce trade tensions and make the global economy less volatile, Wei Shangjin, a Chinese economics professor at Columbia Business School, said.

In a provocative paper, Wei postulated that China's high savings in the past decade is mostly due to families' desire to attract marriage partners for their sons.

Conventional explanation for the excessively high savings rate in China has been cultural, as traditional Confucian culture encourages thrift and savings. But Wei's view homes in on the

gender imbalance.

In China today, there are 122 boys born for every 100 girls, which means one in five men will not find a spouse.

The competition for brides has become severe and results in a high savings rate among Chinese households. The phenomenon is seen in several low-income rural areas, where most parents have a strong preference for having a boy to carry on the family line, Wei said.

Wei, together with Zhang Xiaobo of the International Food Policy Research Institute in Wash-

ington, compared savings data from several regions and from households with boys versus those with daughters.

"We found that not only did households with sons save more, but also households with sons tend to raise their savings rate if they live in a region with a more skewed sex ratio," he said.

For families with boys, saving up to buy a house and a car will help them attract a mate, he said.

According to Wei's research, China's household savings rate rose from 16 percent in 1990 to 30 percent today.

## Background

### Marriage and sons

Traditional attitudes toward marriage and sons are prevalent in rural areas. Sons are seen as an investment in the future, like social security, while girls are considered a wasteful investment.

One of the terms for marriage of women in China is "jia chu qu," which means leaving home and joining another family. Parents of daughters want some return on the investment of feeding and raising a daughter, hence the dowry price.

An old saying goes, a boy is like China Construction Bank. You must save and save in order to afford and buy a house. A girl, on the other hand, is like CITIC, the country's first financial institution set up to raise foreign investment, because she will bring in money from outside.

However, things have changed. Residents of high-income cities like Beijing now seem to prefer girls. Even some rural parents are aware that daughters can contribute to family income and in some ways do so more consistently without appeals to filial piety.

Besides, the marriage cost is no longer a burden nowadays. There is a growing trend towards "naked marriages" in cities. Couples essentially live together with a marriage certificate, but without the elusive apartment and expensive wedding that puts the dreams of so many couples on hold.

## Economists disagree

But not everyone is convinced Wei has the right explanation. "The gender ratio theory is very smart and his thesis is provocative," said Zhao Xiao, an economics professor with the University of Science and Technology Beijing. "But it's certainly not the only explanation."

There are deeper origins in the economy and in policy actions by the government, Zhao said.

Zhao attributes the high rate to the country's lack of a social safety net. "Lack of a reliable

healthcare system and social welfare have made many Chinese choose to self-insure," Zhao said. "People may be saving because they're afraid of losing their jobs."

The current savings rate may be a delay while consumption patterns realign with China's newfound wealth, Zhao said.

He said the theory only identifies a statistical correlation between male-child families and high savings rates, but provides no explanation of the causal relation-

ship between the two: are families that keep sons while giving girls up for adoption intrinsically more disposed to save? Or does the fact of having a son make them so?

"Until such questions are answered, the practical value of the findings seems to me rather limited," Zhao said.

Research by the World Bank in developing and developed economies has found that savings rates are influenced by a wide range of factors which vary between countries.

## Saving for good

While the high savings rate is criticized by some Western countries for creating a global trade imbalance, China said the country is saving for good.

Many foreign politicians accuse the government of pegging its currency at an artificially low exchange rate to gain an unfair competitiveness and pump up savings.

But the People's Bank of China said the country's savings rates

have remained at between 30 and 40 percent for many years.

"High savings were a major weapon that helped China weather the impact of the global financial crisis," Ding Zhijie, deputy dean of the University of International Business and Economics finance school, told Xinhua News Agency.

A high savings rate, along with cheap labor and a huge domestic market, enabled China

and its financial sector to deal with the crisis, he said. It also served as an indicator of insufficient domestic demand.

Ding's viewpoint echoed a recent report by Bank of America, which said Asian financial markets led by China are likely to better cope with the financial crisis as higher savings can help borrowers to weather the economic downturn.

## Beijing to form its own airline

By Zhao Hongyi

Beijing may soon have its own airline, Capital Airways, to facilitate its development as an international city, said a spokesman for Beijing Tourism Group, a leading travel service provider and shareholder in the new airline.

The new airway grew out of Deer Air, an affiliate of Hainan Airlines, one of the major airlines in the country.

Earlier this month, the municipal government of Beijing and Hainan Airlines signed a framework agreement for the new Capital Airways. Beijing Tourism Group will supply the capital for the continued operation of the airline.

Luo Baoming, governor of Hainan Province, said at the signing ceremony that the island expects to attract talents, capital, technologies and skills from Beijing as it reinvents itself as an international resort destination.

Deer Air was established in 2006 in Beijing with a registered capital of 300 million yuan. The airline focuses on commercial transportation out of Capital International Airport. It provides cargo transportation, as well as chartered flights for commerce and travel.

The airline has 25 A319 Airbus planes and has developed 80 regional flights in the country. It has another 20 commercial jets providing chartered services.

"We expect involvement by the Beijing government and Capital Tourism Group will help our business in Beijing," Ning said. The new Capital Airways will have its own logo later this year.

Hainan Airlines has two airways, three luxury towers, three five-star hotels, one air food catering, one travel agency and a number of financial agencies in Beijing.

"A small regional airline can hardly grab a share in a market like Beijing," Ning said. The new Capital Airways will have its own logo later this year. Hainan Airlines has two airways, three luxury towers, three five-star hotels, one air food catering, one travel agency and a number of financial agencies in Beijing. "A small regional airline can hardly grab a share in a market like Beijing," Ning said. The new Capital Airways will have its own logo later this year.

Capital Airline is not the first city airline borne of a Hainan Airlines affiliate.

In June 2009, Lucky Air, another affiliate in Yunnan Province, received 290 million yuan from the Yunnan provincial government.

Later in the same month, Great China Airline of Hainan Airlines was given a 200-million-yuan injection by the Tianjin Port Free Trade Zone Investment and renamed Tianjin Airline.

Most provincial governments want to own a self-branded airline, an official with the Civil Airline Administration of China said.

Aside from Hainan Airlines, Eastern Airlines also signed an agreement with Yunnan Province to form the Eastern Airlines Yunnan late last year. The privately owned Okay Airways is also seeking support from the Tianjin government.

The small airlines are targeting the local market for both capital and market share.

# The curse of widow's year

## Spring Festival sees slump in marriage registrations

By Zhang Dongya

Marriage registration offices nationwide found that fewer couples married this Spring Festival compared to previous years. Officers suggested this might be linked to the superstitious belief in "widow's year."

Widow's year refers to a lunar year in which *lichun*, the beginning of spring, occurs before Spring Festival, which people take to mean that the coming year will not experience spring – a bad omen. This year, *lichun* occurred on February 4 and Spring Festival on February 14.

A year without *lichun* was originally called *gua*, meaning "few" or "scant," a bad year for farmers in ancient times. The character *gua* also means "widowed," so people extended the year's bad luck to marriages.

In Shenyang, Liaoning Province, there was a spike in marriage registrations just before Spring Festival, usually a slow period due to the bitter cold weather. Local media reported that some couples said they were catching "the last bus to matrimony" because the coming year was "widow's year."

Restaurants and hotels across the country also had an unusually busy winter preparing wedding banquets. Love Wedding Planning and Ceremonial Service, in Shenyang, said it saw a 20-percent increase in clients before the new year, an unexpected development.

Zhang Wanhong, an expert on marriage tradition and manager of Wanhong Longxiang Wedding Ceremony Service in Beijing, said that "a year without spring is just a coincidence in the lunar calendar. The chatter about women marrying this year turning into a widow is nonsense, not based on scientific proof."

Unlike other towns and cities, he said the capital suffered minimum impact from the superstition.

"Beijing is an international metropolis which brings together people from different provinces and with different marriage customs. They might abide by tradition back in their hometowns, but they are not as fussy in Beijing," Zhang said.

"Take the wedding ceremony for example; in most northern areas, people hold the event before noon because the afternoon is said to signify a second marriage. But in Tianjin, people hold the ceremony only in the afternoon, while in some regions in the south, such as Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces, people get married in the evening," he said.

Zhang said he expects a good number of couples to defy superstition because of other considerations. "It is the Year of the Tiger, a powerful animal that is supposed to bring good luck and fortune. Also, many couples want to have a baby in the Year of the Rabbit, an animal that is said to have a gentle and moderate character."

There were three widow's year in the past decade: 2002, 2005 and 2008. There is no data showing a significant decrease in the number of newlyweds in those years.

One of the big stories during the first work week after Spring Festival was the pitiful number of marriage registrations across the country during the holiday. Spring Festival is traditionally the peak season for weddings. People attribute the trend to the superstition called the "widow's year," which says bad luck will fall on those who tie the knot in 2010.

Despite repeated clarification from folk custom experts that the belief is not grounded on science, lovers would rather avoid a "doomed year" for such an important life event.



Many couples chose to get married on September 9, 2009, and just as many say the Year of the Tiger is not the right time to say 'I do.'

IC Photo

### Comment

#### Hidden dangers

*In recent years, more and more people have been inclined to get married or have babies in so-called lucky years, for example in 2000, the start of a new century and in 2008, the year of the Beijing Olympics. But this will result in a chain of problems: their children will face more competition in school and later, getting a job. Some choose wedding dates influenced by numerology, but they are actually not well-prepared for married life.*

— Zhang Sining, researcher at Liaoning Academy of Social Science

#### Weird tradition

*Americans also select good dates for their weddings, usually a day that is convenient for family members to gather or when the weather will be nice. There are no specific good-luck days that I know, like August 8 in China. There are a few days with perhaps a little more meaning, like May Day, Midsummer's Eve, but nothing which is extremely popular. As for bad dates, I imagine*

*someone would object to a wedding on the 13th, so this would be a rare date, but I wouldn't have a problem with it. It's just weird to call a whole year as a bad year for getting married.*

— Tom, US resident in Beijing

#### Take rational actions

*Widow's year reflects a herd mentality among Chinese people. People would rather believe it is true to avoid harm, but it is just blind following. There are quite a few friends of mine who are going to get married this year.*

— Han Fei, employee in a foreign firm in Shanghai

#### Interesting and different

*Such traditions in a country like England are much less strong. Maybe people would feel slightly more uncomfortable about holding an event on the 13th, but it is not a big deal anymore. Personally, I would not make any decisions to do things or not do things based upon a number. But I think the Chinese traditions in this area are still rich and interesting.*

— Tony, English resident in Shanghai

### Background

#### Origin of widow's year

The superstition is associated with *yin* and *yang*, the two complementary forces in oriental thought that make up all aspects and phenomena of life.

Yang is a symbol of heaven, representing the male; yin is conceived of as earth, the female. The philosophy also covers the four seasons: spring and summer are yang, autumn and winter are yin.

The lunar calendar breaks down a year into 24 terms that include *lichun*, the start of spring, which the Chinese people believe to be a time of yang or masculine energy.

*Lichun* was crucial aspect of ancient life as it represented birth and life. A year without *lichun* was tantamount to one without yang energy. People also believed that the lack of yang meant the absence of a husband – the formula for making a woman a widow.

A year without *lichun* is to be expected due to the difference between the solar term and the lunar calendar; it has no direct correlation to the outcome of people's marriages.

But superstitious parents who fear dire consequences, including harm to would-be-husbands, failed marriages and unlucky children, urge young people to marry before the coming of a widow's year.



# Finnish photographer talks philosophy through the lens



Kariina's simple wood-and-fabric house in a forest in Tianjin.



Milla Kariina discusses photography with Chinese students in Beijing.

Photos provided by Milla Kariina

By Chu Meng

For Finnish photographer Milla Kariina, a house is more than a home; it is a dynamic structure that changes energy depending on where it is built.

Kariina delves deeper into this concept and the relationship between space and human beings in her first Beijing solo exhibition, "Home – Project," which opens next month at the Three Shadows Photography Art Center.

The exhibition features 18 medium-sized and large photographs and three videos. The photos show the same house – but in various locations – while the videos show empty land-

scapes after the house had been removed from the sites.

To accomplish this, Kariina created a simple, wood and fabric house, which could easily be moved to different locations. The 2-meter-high structure "travels" from Chinese mountains, deserts and city outskirts to Finnish lakesides and forests.

"By placing it in different atmospheres and locations, I can observe the changing relationship between the house and its environment," Kariina said Wednesday, while waiting for a flight to another photo shoot in Mongolia. She said the project has helped her understand human beings'

need for "vital space" that provide warmth and safety.

If Kariina's subject matter seems profound, it is because she draws inspiration from French philosopher Gaston Bachelard. One of her favorite quotes from Bachelard is one that appears in his book *Poetics of Space*: "Before he is 'cast into the world,' man is laid in the cradle of the house. Life begins well, it begins enclosed, protected, all warm in the bosom of the house."

Kariina, 34, knows what it is like to be away from home. She left Finland at age 19 to study photography at Manchester Met-

ropolitan University in England. She spent some time in Spain as a university exchange student, and moved there after graduation to pursue a Ph.D. in fine arts at the University of Barcelona.

In 2003, she held her first solo exhibition in a prominent gallery in Barcelona, Galeria Ferran. Since then, her works have been exhibited in various galleries, photography art centers and museums in Europe.

"When I think about my past, I recall memories that are connected to an interior space," Kariina said. "Dwellings from the past have transformed into images that help us return to the

moments we have lived."

Through Bachelard's philosophy and her work on "Home – Project," Kariina has learned that structures, empty spaces, the environment all melt into one; they are all connected through the feeling of safety and warmth that human beings crave.

## Home – Project

Where: Three Shadows Photography Art Center, Exhibition Hall 3, 155A Caochangdi, Chaoyang District

When: March 6-27, daily 10am to 6pm

Tel: 6432 2663, 6431 9063  
Web: threeshadows.cn

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# Experts say Chinese tigers face rising threats

By Han Manman

Tigers are under threat more than ever, especially in China, where there are fewer than 50 left in the wild, WildAid President Steve Trent said during a recent campaign in Beijing.

Conservationists are taking advantage of the start of the Year of the Tiger to highlight increasing concerns about China's dwindling tiger population, issuing calls to protect tigers in the wild and ramping up efforts to save the endangered species.

According to China's State Forestry Administration (SFA), the country only has a few dozen wild tigers left: about 20 Siberian Tigers in the border of Heilongjiang Province and Russia, eight to 12 Bengal Tigers in southeastern Tibet and 11 to 16 Indochinese Tigers in the southwest.

Trent said that despite a total ban on the trade of tiger products issued by the Chinese government in 1993, there is still huge local demand for tiger parts, such as tiger bone for tonics and tiger skin for clothing and display.

He called on local forestry bureaus to collaborate with law enforcement agencies to increase monitoring and enforcement activities against illegal trade.

"The demand for tiger products drives people to kill the tiger since they know they can get a lot of money only with the cost of a bullet, while farming a tiger costs thousands," Trent said.

Many threatened animal species like the tiger have few, if any, natural predators. But Trent said that with the advancement of technology, the growing world population and the increasing demand for luxury goods, humans have become super predators, making unsustainable demands on the planet and its wildlife.



Despite the total ban on tiger products trade in China, there is still huge local demand for tiger parts. CFP Photo

"Such that we are now undermining the very natural ecosystems which support us and which we all ultimately depend upon," he said.

"By simply not consuming their parts and products and making our support for wildlife and the natural world known, we can influence the unsustainable trade in these animals that is reducing their numbers so rapidly. These individual actions are critically important and we each have a role and a responsibility to act now," Trent said.

China was among 13 Asian countries which last month pledged to double the number of wild tigers by the year 2022, and called for the protection of habitats to save the animals from extinction.

Trent said the global wild tiger population is estimated to be at an all-time low of 3,200, down from 20,000 in the 1980s.

## Australia tightens technical immigration requirements

By Zhao Hongyi

The Australian Embassy has rejected 1,400 applications for technical immigration submitted this year, following a new policy adopted earlier this month, an embassy official said.

Australia's Ministry of Immigration announced February 8 that it will impose a quota for technical immigration applications submitted before September 1, 2007. Once the quota is filled, the ministry will no longer consider subsequent applications.

"We'll withdraw about 1,400 applications in China," Paul Joseph McCormack, the embassy's first secretary for visas, told *Beijing Youth Daily*. "Of course, we'll refund the fees they submitted."

It is expected that at least 20,000 applications worldwide will be withdrawn under the new regulation.

Many Chinese nationals go to Australia to study – either subjects like science and technology or vocational skills like cooking and hairdressing – to qualify as immigrants after graduation. This is a strategy that many immigration and study-abroad agents in China recommend to their clients.

McCormack said "this is irresponsible and will leave Chinese students in trouble."

"They should not mix studying and immigration," he said. "Once you choose to study in Australia, you should focus on studying and coming back after graduation, because study visas are issued only for the purpose of studying."

But the Australian government is providing an alternative option for students hoping for immigrant status.

A "transitional policy" allows them to stay in Australia until the

end of 2012. Before the deadline, those with vocational education certificates or higher education certificates can apply for a temporary visa for another 18 months.

During this period, if they find qualified employers willing to provide them guaranteed work, they can apply for technical immigration, McCormack said.

Market analysts say Australia's new immigration policy will hurt its massive education industry, which relies heavily on international students for revenue.

"This explains why a number of private vocational institutions went bankrupt last year and forced hundreds of Chinese students to give up their studies in the country," said Sun Mingxue, a consultant with JLL Overseas Education, a study-abroad agent.

In a related development, Australia is also strengthening its system for granting visas in a move to combat terrorism. Reports say it has drawn a new list of 10 countries whose nationals are required to provide photos and fingerprints for the immigration and counterterrorism databank. The names of the 10 countries have yet to be released.

Australia is not the only country tightening immigration laws that impact thousands of Chinese students.

The UK has imposed a raft of new conditions on overseas students: they are required to present higher education qualifications before they can pursue further studies in the country; student work hours have been reduced from 20 to 10 hours a week; and a student's accompanying spouse is no longer allowed to find employment in the UK. The regulations take effect March 1.



Studying-abroad agents use immigration as a bait to attract business. CFP Photo

## Australia holding Writers' Week in March

By Zhao Hongyi

The 2010 Australian Writers' Week will take place March 8 to 14 in Beijing and Chengdu, the Australian Embassy recently announced. This is the event's third year in the country, which aims to increase awareness of Australia's contemporary culture and lifestyle among locals.

The Writers' Week will showcase a wide variety of award-winning, contemporary Australian fiction, nonfiction and poetry, with a focus on true stories.

Participants will be given an opportunity to meet and hear from outstanding Australian writers, including Alexis Wright, Les Murray, Linda Jaivin and

Alice Pung, who will take part in a series of book talks, workshops, panel discussions and forums at universities, The Bookworm, The National Library of China and the Australian Embassy.

"I'm very excited to have this opportunity to introduce Chinese readers to the very best of Australian contemporary literature," Australian Ambassador Geoff Raby said.

"Our aim with the Australian Writers' Week is to give current and potential Chinese decision-makers and opinion leaders opportunities to hear the voice of Australian writers on a range of issues. We're also keen to raise the profile of Aus-

tralian writers and their work in China, an important and fast-growing literary market," Raby said.

One of the visiting writers, Alice Pung, was born in Melbourne to Chinese Cambodian parents. She will publish her latest book this year, which was conceived while on a writer's residency at Beijing University in 2008.

The embassy expects the event to further strengthen ties between Australia and China's literary and publishing communities.

The Writers' Week will also feature a publishers' forum on March 10 and 11, bringing high-profile Australian publishers to town.



# Paintings teach students cultural understanding

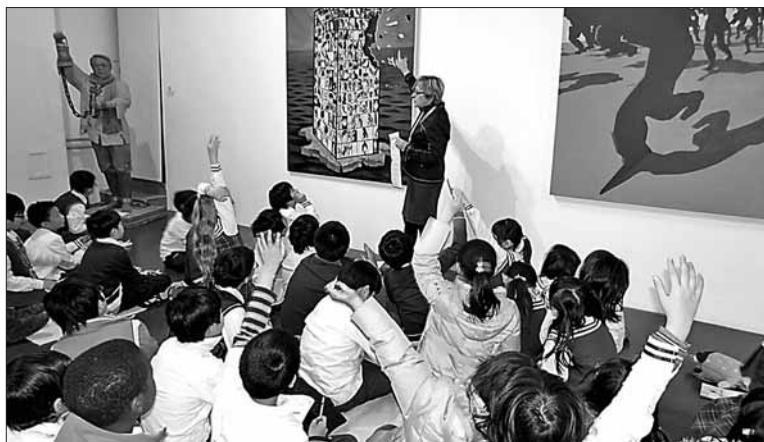
By Chu Meng

Children always surprise adults with their remarkable observations about every day things. How do they understand a piece of art? What kind of artwork do they find most interesting? The Canadian International School of Beijing (CISB) found out when it brought a hundred students on a visit to the Wall Art Museum during the Spring Festival vacation.

The students, ages 7 to 12 and from more than 20 countries, saw 13 pieces from the museum's classic collection, a majority of them abstract paintings. The trip was a part of a cross-cultural program being developed by the CISB and the Wall Art Museum.

"We've selected images that are visually striking to stimulate imaginative thinking," Wen Hezhu, the museum's public relations manager told *Beijing Today*. "This is especially important since their art teachers have encouraged them to write about the paintings using their imagination."

The piece called *Frozen and Sudden Attack* received the most questions and comments from the children. It features a wide variety of animals – fish, birds



Canadian International School students go on a cross-cultural field trip at the Wall Art Museum.

Photo provided by The Canadian International School

and dinosaurs – kept together in a cage on a floating iceberg. Most students believed the artist's message was about the dangers of global warming, such as the melting of icebergs in the South Pole. The students then launched into a discussion of global environmental protection.

"Seeing paintings in a gallery provides an invaluable experience

for students who otherwise may only see such things in magazines or books. Art is something that is best experienced," Jean Klimack, an art teacher at CISB and one of the event's organizers, said.

The teacher also encouraged the students to write fiction or poems based on the art works they saw. "In a multicultural educational environment, the best

thing a teacher can do is to try to open minds. We aim to develop new ways of creative thinking, art-making techniques and show the artistic aspects of different cultures," Klimack said.

Klimack said the trip also aimed to show the children that paintings not only provide information, but that they could also be interpreted in various ways.

## Bookworm's literary festival starts next Friday

By Annie Wei

The Bookworm's annual International Literary Festival is back for the fifth time next Friday. The two-week-long event has become an opportunity for book lovers to meet and interact with some of the top names in global and Chinese literature.

The festival this year features 70 international and local artists, such as Indian author Amitav Ghosh, American playwright and poet Steve Connell, Mexican writer Alberto Ruy Sanchez, English novelist Zoe Heller and Chinese author Hong Ying.

Guests include journalists like Graham Earnshaw, who has worked for *The Daily Telegraph* and Reuters, and Evan Osnos of *The New Yorker* magazine.

Festival activities center on book talks, panel discussions, writing workshops and meet-the-author events, most of which will be held at the Bookworm in Salitun.

Tickets to some of the events, which went on sale earlier this month, are already sold out. To check the festival schedule and find out more, visit

[beijingbookworm.com/schedule2010.php](http://beijingbookworm.com/schedule2010.php)

## Migrant students receive school supplies from networking organization



The Beijing Holiday Party drew 600 people who donated gifts for Miaomiao migrant school.

Photo provided by Networkclub.com

By Annie Wei

Networkclub.com distributed donated toys and school supplies to Miaomiao migrant school Wednesday. Students received a gift, while the school was given school supplies and sporting equipment like ping-pong tables.

Last month, the networking organization sponsored the second Beijing Holiday Party at The Village in Sanlitun, which drew 600 people and was able to collect 3,000 toys and school supplies from participants.

Minnie Li, an officer of Networkclub.com, said the event

in January was much bigger than last year's and that they received more gifts and earned 10,000 yuan from product sales.

To find out more about Beijing Holiday Party and how to get involved in helping migrant schools in Beijing, visit [beijingholidayparty.com](http://beijingholidayparty.com).

## Event

### Secrets of fruitful social networking

There are tons of social networking sites. How many have you signed up with and what brought you there? Have you gained anything from them or do you fear you're suffering from an obsession? Whether you're a big fan or already sick of online social networking, you'll learn something new from this sharing of experiences, including top secrets of fruitful social networking.

Where: E-Salon bar, 21/F, Landgent Center Block B, 20 Dongsanhuan Lu, Chaoyang District

When: February 26, 7:15-9:30 pm  
Tel: 13501265988

### Basic photography and Photoshop lessons

If you've always wanted to know how your SLR camera works, its capabilities and limitations, photographer Lucas Birk will help you. Get a handle on aperture, shutter speed and ISO, and transform the quality of your photographs. The workshop also covers a comprehensive introduction to Photoshop and how you can enhance the quality of your images with just a few clicks.

Where: The Hutong, 1 Jiudaowan Zhongxiang Hutong, Dongcheng District

When: February 27, 10 am - 4 pm  
Tel: 15901046127

### Playwright's workshops

Seats for the Beijing Actor's Workshop's (BAW) spring semester play writing workshops are going fast. Practice and refine the craft of writing for the stage, culminating in a group performance in June. Class time will be spent on writing exercises and reading original material written by BAW members.

Where: Penghao Theater, 35 Dongmianhua Hutong (off Nanlougu Xiang), Dongcheng District

When: Every Saturday from February 27-May 22 (13 classes)

Tel: 6400 6452  
Cost: Enrollment is 50 yuan per class

### Networking over tea

The AmCham-China Women's Professional Committee is shaking things up a bit with scones, clotted cream and tea at Capital M gourmet restaurant. Join the committee members for an afternoon of elegant sophistication with Beijing's leading businesswomen. This premier networking event has limited seating, so sign up right away.

Where: Capital M, 3/F, 2 Qianmen Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: February 27, 3:30-5:30 pm  
Tel: 6702 2727

Cost: 150 yuan for members' advance payment online, 200 yuan for members at the door, 300 yuan for non-members.

(By Wei Ying)



# China increases foreign students' scholarships

By Zhao Hongyi

To attract more foreign students to China, the government plans to offer 20,000 scholarships this year, a 10-percent increase over 2009, Education Minister Yuan Guiren said at a Spring Festival celebration for foreign students in Beijing earlier this month.

The minister also promised to help local governments and universities set up scholarships for foreign students.

In response to the debilitating effects on the education sector brought about by the 2008 financial crisis, the Chinese government raised the number of foreign scholarships in 2009 to 18,078, a 33.8-percent increase over the previous year.

As a result, 230,000 foreign students came to China, making the country one of the top destinations for overseas students. Yuan said China is planning to build on this strength by opening more courses in English.

The Education Ministry also subsidized the education of 500 foreign students so they could continue their studies in the country despite the financial crisis, Yuan said.

Foreign scholarships are divided into several categories: undergraduate, postgraduate, doctor's degree, Chinese studies and senior researchers. There is also a category based on a person's field of specialization.

Scholarships cover school registration fees, tuition fees, the cost of teaching materials, accommodations and living expenses. Foreign scholars also enjoy the same medical benefits as their Chinese counterparts.

Peggy Blumenthal, executive vice president of the US-based Institute of International Education (IIE), confirmed that China is becoming a major destination for foreign students. The IIE, established in 1915, is one of the world's largest international education and training organizations.

"Over the past decade, the number of students from the US



China attracts more and more foreign students each year.

Photo provided by China Scholarship Committee

studying in China has increased six times. In 2009, more than 15,000 American students were studying in China," Blumenthal told the newspaper *Shanghai Wenhui Bao*. "It's an interesting contrast to the figure in 1995, which was only 1,396."

The number of US students studying in China over the past decade grew between 20 and 30 percent annually. "Therefore, it is very realistic that President Obama suggested sending 100,000 American students to study in China in the next four years," Blumenthal said.

Foreign students in China are free to choose their subjects of concentration and schools, "more

free than we were in the early 1980s," said Blumenthal, who studied here in the 1980s but was only allowed to study Chinese.

In the US, Chinese has become the sixth most popular foreign language in schools, Blumenthal said, with some 51,500 students enrolled in Chinese classes. Ten years ago, the number was less than 30,000.

Nearly all the top US universities, including Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Stanford and the University of Southern California, have set up centers to facilitate study in China.

Meanwhile, China has established 282 Confucius Institutes in 80 countries. The number is

expected to reach 500 this year in an effort to promote Chinese language and culture overseas.

For more information about studying in China and applying for a scholarship, visit the China Scholarship Committee's website [csc.edu.cn](http://csc.edu.cn).

You may also call the following personnel in charge of regional programs: Wu Shasha (Africa) 6609 3919, Yuan Jiang (America and Oceania) 6609 3926, Qiu Yong (Asia) 6609 3923, Yu Lijuan (Europe) 6609 3921, Meng Li (Africa and Europe cooperative program) 6609 3920 and Sun Xiaomeng (awards, air tickets and certificates) 6609 3925.

## The Village closes Spring Festival with Terracotta Warriors Lantern Exhibition



CFP Photo

Lighting lanterns is an ancient Spring Festival tradition.

By Zhang Dongya

To mark the Lantern Festival, the end of the Spring Festival season, The Village in Sanlitun will hold a Terracotta Warriors Lantern Exhibition today until Sunday.

The event will showcase 500 lanterns and four floats. One hundred and two lanterns will be in the shape of Xian's famous terracotta warriors, some as high as 2 meters and with facial expressions resembling those of the soldier figures. Each terracotta warrior lantern will contain 13 energy-saving bulbs and two energy-saving tubes.

Another 60 lanterns will

feature hand-drawn decorations from foreign countries, while there will be 150 traditional lanterns called *dengcai* and 120 lanterns themed "polite Beijinger."

The exhibition, which aims to celebrate both ancient civilization and contemporary culture, begins with a lighting ceremony and singing and dance performances at 7 pm today.

### Terracotta Warriors Lantern Exhibition

Where: The Village, 19 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District  
When: Friday - Sunday all day  
Tel: 5166 3828  
Admission: Free

## ASK Beijing Today

Email your questions to: [weiyang@ynet.com](mailto:weiyang@ynet.com)

I've tried to use the blue Yikatong subway and bus card to pay for my taxi fare, but cab drivers refuse to accept it. Why? I thought these cards also worked for taxis.

Many cab drivers are not familiar with this payment system, because few passengers use it. Cab drivers actually received training when the Yikatong card machines were first installed a few years ago, but I guess they have already forgotten how to use it.

I'm marrying a Chinese guy next year in Beijing and I'm already preparing for the big day. We've decided on a Western ceremony and reception. Can you recommend any wedding planners that could help me?

Below are agencies with bilingual service. You should book the planner at least six months before the wedding.

Dahua Jiao Wedding Service Center

Where: 464 Dongsi Bei Dajie, Dongcheng District  
Tel: 6404 3350

Jiufangzhou Wedding Culture Service Center

Where: 149 Dian'men Wai Dajie, Xicheng District  
Tel: 8401 9067

Xishangxi Wedding Service Agency

Where: 3/F, Heping Xincheng Building A, 30 Heping Li Jie, Chao Yang District  
Tel: 8421 9320

I've heard about the art house cinema at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) and want to know more, but I cannot find any useful information in English on MOMA's website.

The art house is a three-screen cinema showing a mix of art and commercial films. Its website is still under construction, but you can join its mailing list to have the cinema's program sent to you. This month, it is holding a Xie Jin retrospective and will also screen a couple of films in its New Chinese Filmmakers' series. The art house has a cafe and a library, which allows you to borrow films and books after making a deposit of 200 yuan. For more information, call 8438 8257.

A visiting friend wants to stay longer in the country. Where can she get a health check, which is a requirement for visa extension? I can't find much information about it online.

When a person extends his visa in China or changes his visa type, the Public Security Bureau's exit and entry administration will tell him which hospital to visit for his health examination.

(By Wei Ying)

# Remove the mou

## "World City" Beijing hosts overseas Spring Festivals

By Yu Shanshan

It began in 2000, when Jiang Zemin announced his master plan for boosting China's image around the globe. Since then, Spring Festival has become a "flagship brand" the country spreads at international exchanges.

This year, Chinese New Year performances in Brussels, Valletta and Berlin stunned European viewers.

But that is no surprise – after 10 years of advertising China around the world, Beijing's delegation knows how to wow a crowd.

Now, delegation organizer Wang Hui and her group have a new mission to tackle: What will make Beijing a "World City"?

**I**t was the first day of Chinese New Year, a time for family reunions.

The China National Acrobatic Troupe brought out the best of its repertoire for the year of China in Brussels.

Though they were limited by the size of Woluhills, their performance wowed all.

It is hardly an exaggeration to say there was 50 minutes of applause during the hourlong acrobatic show that ended Europalia.China.

The night before, Wang called home to tell her daughter how much she missed home. "Why, you have so many people

around!" her daughter joked.

"(But) on that evening, I felt deeply homesick," she said.

Wang was away from home again during Spring Festival, this time touching hearts in Europe.

It was the busiest Festival yet for the veteran. She was one of the first sent abroad to do image work in the US and France before the Beijing Olympics.

The biennial Europalia international arts festival ended its four-month run with Beijing culture week.

After spending years of these "Beijing Weeks" – some of which coincided with Spring Festival – abroad, Wang said seeing non-Chinese people connect with the heart of a far away culture was what makes it all worthwhile.

Many cities have Chinese New Year celebrations organized by visiting Chinese provincial and municipal governments, or by local associations. New York, London and Paris have named Chinese New Year as an official holiday.

A group of 50 artists from Beijing companies and schools of dance, music, acrobatics

and martial arts took the stage in Malta and Berlin at halls and theaters to perform as Europalia.China drew to a close in Brussels.

"I'm so glad to see Chinese culture is starting to flow in the blood vessels of Europe," said Long, a Chinese national who has been living in France for 20 years.

Western Europe is changing, but far from enough people know China.

Beijing Today recorded the stories of the officials, organizers, artists and visitors, and what impressions they have of Beijing as the next "World City."



Xinhua Photo



(Left) Wang Hui, director of the Information Office of Beijing Municipality, and Zhang Keyuan, Chinese ambassador to Malta, walk the Spring Festival parade in Valletta. (Right) Migrant workers through the lens of Palmer P. Frank, one of 80 photos in the Charming Beijing photography exhibition in Brussels.

### Beijing Wave

## Into the mainstream

"Fifteen years ago, it was hard for us to get mainstream attention. Now everyone is eager for a look – they know we bring the best," Zhang Yuanqian, Chinese ambassador to Belgium, said.

Zhang squeezed into the crowded Charming Beijing photography exhibition that opened the Beijing culture week of Europalia.China at the Brussels Info Place (BIP), which is beside the Royal Palace, the city center and a must-see sight for visitors.

The standing photography project was organized by the capital's Information Office. Since 2002, the Information Office has invited photographers from China and abroad to capture images of Beijing.

The government archive has more than 5,000 shots, with themes ranging from the old capital to the modern metropolis. Eighty were shown in Brussels.

"I don't understand Chinese, but I get the pictures," a Brussels citizen said, standing in a maze of shots of the Forbidden City, National Theater, street dancers and smiling migrant workers.

"The colors are so bright and the city looks beautiful. I hope I can go to Beijing and see it for myself."

"These pictures by Western photographers might help Western people discover something different from what they see on their TVs," Wang Hui said.

Europalia was host to 50 exhibitions and 450 performances of China's best: past and present. The exhibits were shown at 210 sites in 75 cities in Belgium and its neighboring countries. More than 1,800 Chinese artists took part in entertaining a million visitors.

When the festival ended, Beijing officials were told more than 100,000 people – 10 percent of Brussels – had been to the Tea House, the festival information center and a stage for traditional music and handicrafts.

Tickets to Three Dreams of Mandarin, an exhibition of 109 objects from Beijing's Capital Museum, cost €6.5 (60 yuan) when 45,000 people came to see it, far exceeding the ticketers' expectations.

"It might seem like a small number to

China, but 45,000 people is a big deal here in Brussels," said Patricia De Peuter, director of ING Art Service.

The week also saw sold out performances by the Beijing Modern Dance and China National Acrobatic Troupe and screenings of five films made between 1994 and 2008.

Compared to Brussels, Malta is even friendlier. "Chinese culture is very important," said Alexei Dingli, mayor of the country's capital Valletta.

Malta was the first European country to establish diplomatic relations with China and was the site of the first China Culture Center in Europe in 2001.

Even so, the countries shared little cultural dialogue before Spring Festival 2007, when the local government held a Chinese New Year parade on Republic Street, its main shopping venue leading to Palace Square. Valletta has a small population of 6,000, and it seemed like everyone was in the parade.

In a shop on Republic Street, after serving the reporter, one salesman shouted, "Happy

New Year! I am a rabbit."

"Last year, I saw some shoppers hang red lantern during Spring Festival. Our New Year helps them make more money. Now almost everyone in Malta knows their birth animal is the Chinese zodiac," Zheng Hao, director of China Cultural Center, said.

The celebration in Berlin was held in another popular site, Berlin Central Station.

"From here, you can reach every place of Europe," the station manager said. At the entrance to Berlin Central Station, the nexus of Europe's rails, artists from Berlin performed traditional dance, martial arts and acrobatics. Nine craftsmen from Chongwen District showed off their handicrafts in the central hall for passengers. With the background of traditional Chinese music, fireworks bloomed in the sky out of the station. After it, people began to greet every Chinese around "Happy New Year."

"We're no longer limited to the Chinese community. Being a World City means being loved by the world," Wang Hui said.



# ntain



Tea House, the epicenter of Europalia.China.

Xinhua Photo



Xinhua Photo



Photo by LiYang

(Left) People in Berlin's Central Station are interested in the paintings listed as an intangible cultural heritage.  
(Right) A Brussels resident tries his hand at tea art.

## Beijing Memory

### A beautiful way to know others

"Chinese have a saying: Yugong Yishan, faith will move mountains. That perfectly summarizes the cooperation between us and our Chinese colleagues," said Claire Kirschen, general commissioner of Europalia China, and former Belgian ambassador to China.

Her friend went to Brussels for a three-week holiday. On leaving, she told Kirschen, the best part of Brussels was seeing Europalia China.

"The quality came out of a fantastic cooperation. Despite having little knowledge about China, they were patient and willing to learn and merge their strengths with ours," said Yu Ping, deputy director of the Beijing Municipal Administration of Cultural Heritage, which organized the Three Dreams of the Mandarin exhibition.

"We hope to leave in Belgium a Chinese cultural memory for everyone," said Kristine De Mulder, general manager of Europalia, "To create the most beautiful way to know the Chinese people."

Brussels provided the theme mountains and religion, with a focus on philosophy. Beijing responded saying it was too absurd, so Brussels sent a team of researchers to China.

The decision was to focus on the people, specifically on the mandarin.

To become a mandarin meant learning the classics, joining the royal court and serving the country – it was the greatest aspiration for centuries, and the foundation of modern dreams.

Capital Museum has plenty of Ming and Qing objects that speak volumes about the mandarins' lives. The three "dreams" categories included 109 objects from Capital Museum, and more from other museums and private collectors.

At the entrance to the exhibition at Espace Culturel ING "sits" a typical mandarin man. Past his gaze is the dreams.

The Bamboo Dream illustrates the priorities of a mandarin's life: independence from power, friendship with peers and intensive artistic discipline. The Cherry Tree Dream tells the love stories of men and women who express their love to share artistic and literary tastes. The Butterfly Dream recreates the environment of a garden, a place of intimacy, of communion with nature.

"We never had a mandarin class in Europe. In preparing the show, I was deeply moved by the three dreams ... to serve the country by studying hard, live friendly with nature and love family and friends. The pursuits of the Chinese mandarin are not only the heritage of the Chinese, but of the whole world," said Patricia De Peuter, director of ING Art Service.

"They didn't just put all these treasures behind glass as is common of so many exhibitions at home. They found a way to make it louder," Yu Ping said.

At the corner of the exhibition, visitors could try their hand at calligraphy using the four treasures of the study: writing and painting brushes, ink sticks, ink slabs and calligraphy paper. ING bank also provided background material about the Qingshuhua – Chinese music, chess, books and paintings. It sent out exhibition pamphlets and quiz sheets, the first prize winner of which could win a free trip to China.

"We were inspired by them in many ways," Yu said. Inspiration goes both ways: the Tea House was another good example.

The Dynasty Building on Mont des Arts was dormant the last 50 years. The single-story brick building, once a meeting and exhibition hall, reopened for Europalia China.

Past the main gate, where "Unity makes strength" is written in French and Dutch, Wang Hui saw a wasted hall caked in dust.

Months later, it was a Chinese tea house complete with Gu Wenda's lantern outfit. The interior was furnished with bamboo tables and chairs and divided into sections for souvenirs, handicrafts and tea art performances, restaurants and traditional stage.

Every afternoon students from the China Conservatory played traditional music, visitors sampled tea and learned more about Europalia.

"I'll give my special thanks to Ms. Wang Hui from Beijing Municipality. Without her, it's impossible for us to have this delicate Tea House," said Claire Kirschen at the opening ceremony of Beijing Week.

"For me, China equals green tea," said a student from Turkey who traveled to Brussels for the tea festival. Another Brussels resident who was invited to try his hand at tea arts told reporters the tea house had inspired him to try driving from Belgium to China.

"I want to feel the cities and Chinese culture on my own so I can understand better," he said.

Continued on page 14 ...



Two visitors learn about the treasures of the ancient mandarin at *The Three Dreams of the Mandarin*.

Photo by Li Yang



Wang Hui negotiates with Wolubilis staff to get a "Welcome to Beijing" video added to the show.

Photo by Yu Shanshan

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## Beijing Present

# Going abroad with creativity

"Chinese artists are clever and quick learners. They can merge old and new, which surprised us," Kirschen said.

When the world heads East, Chinese artists go West. The beauty of ancient China alone is no guarantee of success. The strength of contemporary art is in a blending of Chinese and Western styles.

"We invited popular modern dance companies, calligraphers and artists from Beijing and China to let audiences see the diversity and continuity of Chinese culture. To let them live the real China," Kirschen said.

Chinese artists are rarely satisfied with performing their usual routines, and are always looking for a chance to try something new.

Beijing Modern Dance Company was specially invited by the organizing committee. The company brought its greatest hits *Oath*, *Midnight Rain* and *Unfettered Journey* to Europalia. *Oath* explores the choreographer's understanding of the Buddhist Samsara and *Journey* is Zhuangzi's "Free and Easy Wandering."

So many people tried to get in to see the dance that they forced a 25-minute delay while the theater added an extra two rows of seats.

The National Acrobatic Troupe's *Splendid* has a long history of being sold out. The show was born when acrobatics was wedded to modern dance, martial arts, Chinese opera and gymnastics.

Its 13 acts include ballet, hand-to-hand balancing, plate spinning, ball catching, flying, air jumping and catching, balancing, hoop tumbling, diabolo and a pagoda of bowls. The cast includes 100 acrobats, 40 of whom are international gold prizewinners.

Since it debuted in 2008, the program has been performed more often abroad than at home.

"Western countries have a more mature market than China, so we travel a lot and make a good living there. The world tour gave us valuable experience and we learned how to entertain world audiences," Sun Lili, the troupe's vice director, said on New Year's Eve while making dumplings with actors backstage at Wolubilis.

The 400 seats, each €30, sold out for every show in Belgium. Sun had to sit on the stairs watching the performance. A day after they returned to Beijing they

were scheduled for another 100 performances in Japan.

Behind the seemingly conventional stage are those who experiment. Stage director of Spring Festival shows in Malta and Germany Sun Bo, from Beijing Municipal Bureau of Culture, is working to find an international language for Chinese classics.

In January, his experimental Peking Opera *Shuihu* (Outlaws of the Marsh) took the stage at Paris' MC 93 theater.

Five years ago, Sun told his Japanese friend, a stage producer, he hoped to adapt *Shuihu* into a modern Peking Opera. His friend introduced him to Patrick Sommer, boss of MC 93. Sommer flew to China to live with the performers, students at Beijing Peking Opera School.

Sommer's direction combined Peking Opera stage performance with advanced stage preparation and makeup for a box office smash.

"My next dream is to make a Peking Opera about Greek mythology," Sun said. "What we are considering now is a route to connect with the international community."

It's not just about finding a new way to tell old stories: artists are eyeing the international market.

"Actually, all of our craftsmen hope to enter the European market," said Ma Chunyan, foreign affairs officer of Chongwen District.

Beside her were nine stands, each of which belonged to an heir of an intangible cultural heritage in Chongwen District. The artisans worked at their craft, selling finished pieces to visitors.

Peng Xiaoping, the current heir of a dough figurine-making tradition, said listening to Western ideas might offer new life for an endangered art. He made dough figurines of Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama and received some attention for making Harry Potter and a romantic knight.

Peng and eight other artists belong to Baigongfang, an association of artists who have mastered endangered handicrafts and who share their experiences to find a better way to make a living with their unique skills.

The Beijing Tourism Administration's project, Beijing Present, which repackaged and publicized the handicrafts, gave Peng hope for the future, he said.

Continued on page 15 ...



Acrobats show off their skills with diabolo in the Palace Square of Valletta.

Photo by Li Yang



... continued from page 14



Acrobats gather at the front desk of Wolubilis after a successful show to end Europalia China.

Photo by Yu Shanshan

## China Dream

## Keen to know more

"People here know little about China, but their hopes to know more increase day by day," said Wu Hongbo, Chinese ambassador to Germany.

For some young people, China is still a far off land of fairy tales.

Momoyo Kokubu, who married a Brusseleir, took her daughter and the girl's 7th grade classmates to the tea house on one of their days off.

One of the three girls, Alizee, has a picture of a Chinese character hung in her bedroom. She imagines China as a place of dragons and ancient magic.

Veerle Geens, a university student studying Japanese culture, went to see the Silk Road exhibition with her mother and on their way back, dropped by the tea house for a cup of green tea. For her, the country's name conjures up images of cramped streets, high mountains and the Great Wall – a juxtaposition of new and old.

For people who do business with China, Spring Festival is a chance for new exchanges. John Zerafa, a Malta businessman working with COSCO, is studying Chinese at the China Cultural Center of Malta. After walking through the New Year parade in Valletta, he told reporters the most important lesson he learnt: Chinese culture is tied to business.

He related the story of a friend who went to sign a contract with his Chinese partner in Shanghai. After shaking hands, the businessman took him sightseeing and out to eat. The time was almost up and he felt angry that the contract was left unresolved.

On the last day, only after pushing at him, the businessman finally agreed to talk about the contract.

"This is Chinese business."



Alexandra Verhoosel

Photo by Yu Shanshan

People need to feel secure before going into a deal. You have to invest the time to make a personal connection," Zerafa said.

"A lot of foreigners feel like they are being toyed with when they are taken to non-business activities, but for Chinese people that is a way to be hospitable," Wang Hui said.

Alexandra Verhoosel, who ran the Tea House, is also familiar with that idea of hospitality.

Nine years ago, when she left her professional career as a psychiatric nurse, Verhoosel decided to visit her daughter who had settled in Shanghai. She was too busy with her job to stay with her mother, so Verhoosel started exploring the town on her own.

She set up quarters in a tea house as a first step. While trying to talk to other guests and the owners, she discovered a new universe of tea.

At first she simply carted fine teas back home to her friends in Belgium. After a while, a friend convinced her to start a small business. Together with her son Hans, who runs a small premium coffee operation in the UK, Verhoosels founded Lu Lin for the direct import of premium Chinese teas.

"Now we have our own trusted agent in Shanghai and travel together with him to selected tea gardens, all family owned," she said.

At Tea House, green teas by LuLin are among the best sellers, together with silk scarves and wooden miniatures.

"I still drink coffee every morning: it's in my blood. But at the same time I enjoy a cup of tea. We are passionate about China, Chinese teas and tea culture. I found a fascinating inroad to a new land, new knowledge and new friends."



Photo by Yu Shanshan



Photo by Huang Wei

(Above) An acrobat from the China National Acrobatic Troupe waits backstage.  
(Bottom) Two visitors learn about the real Beijing at the Charming Beijing exhibition.

# Shopping for an engagement ring online

By Chu Meng

It's the start of a new lunar year and couples are surely contemplating the next step in their lives together. For men with marriage on their minds, *Beijing Today* offers some help choosing a diamond engagement ring that will show the lady the depth of your commitment yet not scare you off with its price tag. We suggest shopping online.

People should pick a retailer that has a wide selection of diamonds, provides good customer service and offers reasonable prices. With one click of a mouse, buying a diamond ring that says forever can now be as easy as downloading a photo.

## Source for Tiffany-style diamond rings

Whiteflash.com specializes in premium-cut diamonds, or A Cut Above (ACA) Hearts and Arrows diamonds. These are stones cut using a technique that creates eight heart and arrow shapes that can be seen from above and underneath the gem.

The online boutique is ideal for fans of Tiffany rings who are on a limited budget. Whiteflash has a variety of Tiffany-style engagement rings, including the regular, heavy, 4-prong, 6-prong and knife-edge designs. They come in gold, white gold and platinum.

Debi Wexler, a computer entrepreneur, founded the company in 2000 and brought an expansive selection of loose diamonds to the Internet. Whiteflash.com donates part of its profits to programs that support the health care, nutrition and education of children.



## World's biggest online jewelry retailer



Mark Vadon started Bluenile.com after an unsavory shopping experience in 1998. Then a consultant with Stanford University's MBA program, a luxury jewelry store in San Francisco ignored him when he went engagement-ring shopping because he was wearing a T-shirt and shorts. A few days later, he found a diamond ring from an online retailer at only half the original price. It suddenly dawned on him that this could be a great business idea. A year later, he bought an old website for \$6 million (41 million yuan) and renamed it Bluenile.com.

Within eight years, Bluenile became the largest online retailer for certified diamonds and fine jewelry. Its success is built on its motto, "Choosing an engagement ring doesn't have to be complicated." It has simplified the ring-selection process into selecting a stone, within eight years, Bluenile became the largest online retailer for certified diamonds and fine jewelry. Its success is built on its motto, "Choosing an engagement ring doesn't have to be complicated." It has simplified the ring-selection process into selecting a stone,

picking a matching setting for the stone and completing the ring. All its diamonds and gemstones are certified by some of the world's most respected independent diamond- and jewelry-grading laboratories.

Bluenile customers can call 001-800-2420-2728 to speak to a service representative who can introduce the company's products. Only orders of more than 3,500 yuan, paid using Visa or MasterCard, can be shipped to China. Returns are allowed, no questions asked, within 30 days of product receipt.

Besides diamond engagement rings, Bluenile also creates wedding rings, anniversary rings and watches with gemstones, platinum, gold or silver.

## Most successful domestic retailer

Zbird.com, the biggest domestic loose diamond and jewelry online retailer, was started on eBay.com by siblings Xu Xiao and Xu Lei in 2002. Xu Xiao, the sister, had become an expert dealer on eBay, while Xu Lei, her elder brother, had been in the wholesale diamond business for years. Seven years later, their sales hit 300 million yuan. Besides selling online, the company also runs jewelry stores in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Chengdu.

Though the number and variety of diamonds Zbird offers cannot be compared to those of Bluenile and Whiteflash, it still has a pool of 4,000 certified diamonds and bands – 10 times the options found in shopping malls and regular jewelry stores. On top of this, Zbird offers discounts of up to 60 percent. Customers can pay with Chinese credit cards or a third-party billing system through all state-owned banks.

The site also has an active forum where diamond greenhorns can learn about how to find the best diamond and get a advice if a particular deal is too good to be true.



## Buyer's Guide

Use below measures to make sure you get the right diamond for your needs, especially when buying one online.

**Carat** refers to a diamond's weight, not its size.

Fact: A carat is one-fifth of a gram.

Tip: A lighter rock will likely fetch a lower price per carat, but that 0.9-carat diamond will sparkle more than a 1.0-carat example if the cutter trimmed its excess weight correctly.

**Clarity** is the degree to which a diamond is free of flaws.

Fact: Flaws cut a gem's price.

Tip: Never choose stones with flaws that the naked eye can see, no matter how cheap they are. There are six clarity codes: FL, IF, VVS, VS, SI and P, from the best to the worst.

**Color** refers to a diamond's transparency.

Fact: As a rule, the more transparent the stone, the higher its price.

Tip: Compromises on color may escape unnoticed. A nearly colorless stone will look the same to an untrained eye as a colorless stone (with a higher grade), but will cost less.

**Cut** refers to a diamond's shape and style.

Fact: A diamond's shape (round or square, for example) and style (such as brilliant, with facets radiating outward) are factors that together make up the stone's cut.

Tip: Cut can make a diamond appear larger or smaller than its carat weight.

**Cut grade** judges brilliance and sparkle, plus other factors.

Fact: Cut grade is the most important indicator of a diamond's wow effect. Fewer than 5 percent of diamonds on the market would earn high marks if given a cut grade.

Tip: Stones with similar cut grades should be priced about the same.



CFP Photos



# Old names open new stores around Sanlitun

By Annie Wei

The bustling dining scene around Sanlitun never fades. New restaurants continue to mushroom, even while other shops experience sagging sales. This week we focus on three new restaurants with old brand names.



**Authentic Hunan in a grand atmosphere**

Steamed fish head with peppers, 118 yuan

CFP Photo

Beijing's most popular Hunan restaurants are the "humble ones," located on side streets and offering authentic yet inexpensive fare. Xianghuatian, on the third floor of Kaifu Plaza in Sanlitun, offers the same food quality but in a grand atmosphere.

For starters, we recommend baked fish with spicy sauce (22 yuan), a traditional snack of tiny fish baked then fried with spicy sauce in Hunan's capital Changsha. The marinated fish with alcohol sauce (18 yuan) is also worth a try. The chef gets the fish drunk before it is cooked, giving the meat a stronger alcohol flavor than if liquor is added only during the cooking process.

Cold dishes like tofu skin rolls with flavor (16 yuan) and fried radish peel with Hunan flavor (16 yuan) are also good choices.

For mains, the adventurous can try stewed crocodile and turtle with special flavor (288 yuan per 500 grams). There is also braised fish in thick soup (188 yuan per 500 grams), sour and spicy chicken (48 yuan) and braised spare ribs with sauce (98 yuan) generously topped with Hunan peppers and

fermented soybeans.

The Hunanese love their eggplant, so for a real Hunan meal, we recommend eggplant in bowl (32 yuan), which has sliced eggplant and cowpeas.

Xianghuatian's braised fermented tofu with Changsha flavor (2 yuan per piece) is also good. Changsha's fermented tofu has its own character: it is fried to dark brown or black till the skin becomes crispy, but the inside remains tender. The flavor is strong and spicy.

The restaurant also offers Cantonese cuisine. Since southerners favor seafood, the restaurant offers at least 10 types of fish and seafood like wrasse, sea bass, tiger grouper, Australian lobster, clams and wild abalone. The live seafood's cost depends on their seasonal price, but they are not cheap.

Xianghuatian is owned by a leading Hunan restaurant and hotel chain. It has an older outlet in Haidian District.

**Xianghuatian**

Where: 3/F Kaifu Dasha, 6 Gongti Bei Lu, Chaoyang District  
Open: 10 am - 10 pm  
Tel: 8523 6888

## Bite-A-Pitta moves to Sanlitun

There is a new business sign along the busy alley between Nali Patio and The Village in Sanlitun: Bite-A-Pitta, a restaurant specializing in Israeli dishes.

It opened five years ago on Laitai Nüren Jie, a restaurant hub that was demolished a year ago. Bite-A-Pitta was finally resurrected last week in Tongli mall, a more popular entertainment venue.

Avi Shabtai, Bite-A-Pitta's owner who came to Beijing 10 years ago, said his wife decided to start the restaurant since she had difficulty finding good Middle Eastern food in town. The place has since developed loyal clientele, but Shabtai said that their open windows is still a good way to attract hungry passersby.

Its food is simple but well-prepared and presented. Diners can start with 10 mezze dishes (50 yuan), delicious snacks and appetizers of North Africa, the eastern Mediterranean, and the Middle East, mopped up with pitta bread. There are also appetizers like falafel, baba ganoush (an Arabian dish of mashed eggplant mixed with various seasonings) and fried eggplant, which cost between 22 and 30 yuan.

The health conscious can order a traditional salad (20 to 38 yuan) or combined salad (35 to 40 yuan). Pitta sandwich and pitta nini sets (20 to 35 yuan) come with French fries and a soft drink.

For vegetarians, the owners suggest tabouleh (a popular Middle Eastern salad, 65 yuan), fattoush (a Levantine salad made from toasted or fried pieces of pita combined with mixed greens, 65 yuan) and shakshuka (an Israeli egg dish, 65 yuan).

Meat lovers can go for shawarma or chicken schnitzel (80 yuan), rump steak (90 yuan), grilled fish or pan-fried fish fillets tilapia musht (100 yuan), sea bass (115 yuan) or grilled favorites like lamb and chicken (45 to 60 yuan).

**Bite-A-Pitta**

Where: Unit 201, 2/F, Tongli Building, 43 Sanlitun Bei Lu, Chaoyang District  
Open: 10 am - midnight  
Tel: 6467 2961



Middle Eastern coffee, 15 yuan



Traditional snack, 25 yuan



Chicken pita nini set, 35 yuan Photos by Huang Xiao

## Pizza heaven from Napoli

La Piazza, the Solana pizza place boasting chefs from Naples, Italy, opened another store at 3-3 Mall in Sanlitun. The restaurant has glass walls, which allow passersby to see its large brick oven that produces 12-inch fragrant pizzas with tasty, colorful toppings.

Does La Piazza make the best pizza in town? Many Italians think so; they consider pizza in Naples the best in their home country.

The restaurant's menu offers 27 traditional pizzas, seven special pizzas, five spicy ones and eight types of calzone. For a pizza fan in Beijing, this looks to be the next best thing to going to Naples.

Recommended pizzas include margherita classica (48 yuan for 33 centimeters; 100 yuan for 50 centimeters), margherita con funghi (68 yuan and 138 yuan) and pizza vegetariana (78 yuan and 158 yuan) for nonmeat eaters.

Their unique creations like pizza Beijing (78 and 150 yuan) and pumpkin pizza (78 and 156 yuan) are also worth trying.

La Piazza also serves fried mashed potato (18 yuan), various traditional Italian appetizers (35 to 90 yuan), pasta (30 to 68 yuan), main courses like seafood grill (98 yuan), beef (88 yuan) and nice desserts with coffee.

**La Piazza**

Where: 1/F, 3-3 Mall, No. 33 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District  
Open: 10:30 am - 11 pm  
Tel: 5136 5582



Traditional Napoli pizza starts at 48.

CFP Photo



Pasta, 30 to 68 yuan

Photo by Huang Xiao

# The childhood of artists

By He Jianwei

To post-'80s generation artists like Yu Xiao, Liu Xiaofang and Song Shimin, childhood memories serve as principal raw materials for their works, such as the collection of photographs that will go on exhibit at 798 Photo Gallery next Saturday.



Yu's photos include a portrait of a girl who at first glance seems to resemble the artist. A closer look reveals that it is in fact a current portrait of Yu, just made smaller. It is part of a series about the artist's personal development, the memories of which "I locked in my heart for many years," she said.

Yu grew up lavished with love by her parents and teachers – a dream childhood. But in 2008, on the eve of her college graduation, she discovered that the real world was not the one she had known when she tried to find a job.

"The first time I left the cocoon of love and protection, I became so scared of social pressure. Deep down in my heart, I cried: 'I don't want to grow up,'" she said.

Art helped Yu keep her ideal world alive. "My fantasies are embodied in spring fields, a silent village and the path I used to trek to primary school," she said. Childhood buddies, dolls and her little red bike also figure into her photos.

"I wish that my artwork might bring back lovely memories and bring a sweet smile" to audiences, Yu said.

Meanwhile, Song's photographs revolve around the subject of lonely, regret-filled childhoods. In one, a schoolgirl is seen on a platform, holding a trophy but with a somber face. "There is always a huge gap between dreams and reality. Success and failure have lost their rigid meaning," Song said.

Liu's photos, on the other hand, show children with even expressions; they are neither ecstatic, sorrowful nor worried. All these emotions have finally dissolved into peace and tranquility.

**Linger – Photography by Yu Xiao, Liu Xiaofang and Song Shimin**

Where: 798 Photo Gallery, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District  
When: March 6 – April 16, daily except Monday, 10 am – 6 pm  
Admission: Free  
Tel: 6438 1784

Yu Xiao's Childhood seires

Photo provided by 798 Photo Gallery

## Upcoming

**Concert**  
**This is Us – Backstreet Boys World Tour Beijing Concert**  
Where: Wukesong Arena, 69 Fuxing Lu, Haidian District  
When: March 17, 8 pm  
Admission: 180-1,280 yuan  
Tel: 400 888 4040

## Stage in March

### Concert

**Impressions of New York – The American String Quartet**

Where: Concert Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: March 13, 7:30 pm  
Admission: 80-400 yuan  
Tel: 6655 0000

### Chopin Cycle I

– All Mazurkas

Where: Forbidden City Concert Hall (in Zhongshan Park), 18 Zhaodengyu Lu, Xicheng District

When: March 14, 7:30 pm  
Admission: 30-380 yuan  
Tel: 6417 7845

### Dance

**Her Story**

Where: Small Theater Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District  
When: March 4-5, 7:30 pm  
Admission: 180-380 yuan  
Tel: 6655 0000

### The Color of Love

Where: Peking University Hall, 5 Yiheyuan Lu, Haidian District

When: March 6, 7 pm  
Admission: 80-180 yuan  
Tel: 6275 8452

### Drama

**Mao Zedong's Reverie at Xibaipo**

Where: Theater Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: March 10-14, 7:30 pm  
Admission: 80-400 yuan  
Tel: 6655 0000

### Musical

**Butterflies**

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District  
When: March 3, 7:30 pm  
Admission: 50-680 yuan  
Tel: 6551 8058

### Opera

**The Voice from Heaven – Countertenor Andreas Sholl Recital**

Where: Concert Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District  
When: March 5, 7:30 pm  
Admission: 80-480 yuan  
Tel: 6655 0000

(By He Jianwei)

## Friday, February 26

# 5

### Movie

**The Man of My Life (2006)**

Where: Sculpting in Time – Beihang (Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics), 37 Xueyuan Lu, Haidian District  
When: 7:30 pm  
Admission: 15 yuan  
Tel: 8231 0664

### The Search (2007)

Where: Broadway Cinematheque, 2/F Building 4, North section of the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), 1 Xiangheyuan Lu, Dongcheng District  
When: 7:30 pm  
Admission: 30 yuan, 20 yuan for students  
Tel: 8438 8258 ext. 8008

### Exhibition

**Emotional Poetry Painting – Zhao Yinglan Solo Exhibition**

Where: Today Art Museum, Building 4, Pingod Community, 32 Baizhiwan Lu, Chaoyang District  
When: Until March 3, daily except Monday, 10 am – 5 pm  
Admission: 20 yuan, 10

yuan for students  
Tel: 5876 9804  
**Nightlife**



### Funk It!

Where: Mao Livehouse, 111 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District  
When: 9 pm  
Admission: 60 yuan advance purchase, 50 yuan at the door  
Tel: 6586 0065 ext. 8213

### Our Creative Commune Concerts

Where: Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA), 798 Art District, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District  
When: 7:30-9 pm  
Admission: 30 yuan, 20 yuan for students  
Tel: 8459 9269

# 6

## Saturday, February 27

### Movie

**Oxhide (2004)**

Where: Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA), 798 Art District, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District  
When: 7 pm  
Admission: Free  
Tel: 8459 9269

### Riverdance:

**The New Show (1996)**

Where: Lady Book Saloon, 69 Chengfu Lu, Haidian District  
When: 7 pm  
Admission: Free  
Tel: 6270 1928

### Nightlife

**Hoochie Coochie Gentleman**

Where: Jianghu Bar, 7 Dongmianhua Hutong, Jiadaokou Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District  
When: 9:30 pm  
Admission: 30 yuan advance purchase, 40 yuan at the door  
Tel: 6401 4611

### Seph Live

Where: Lantern, B1, 3-3 Mall, 33 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District

ang District

When: 9 pm

Admission: 50 yuan advance purchase, 80 yuan at the door  
Tel: 13810347555

### Exhibition



**Wang Wei – Ink and Wash Portrait Paintings**

Where: Noda Contemporary Beijing, Hong'eryuan, Caochangdi Village, Cuigezhuang, Chaoyang District  
When: Until April 17, except weekends, 9 am – 5:30 pm  
Admission: Free  
Tel: 5127 3187

## Sunday, February 28

### Exhibition

**Amidst Images – Ding Sizhong Solo Exhibition**

Where: Taihe Art Gallery, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District  
When: Until March 9, daily except Monday, 10 am – 6 pm  
Admission: Free  
Tel: 5978 9856

### Movie

**La Question Humaine (The Human Question, 2007)**

Where: French Cultural Center, 1/F, Guangcai International Mansion, 18 Gongti Xi Lu, Chaoyang District  
When: 3 pm

Admission: 20 yuan, 10 yuan for students

Tel: 6553 2627

### The Rest is Silence (2007)

Where: Broadway Cinematheque, 2/F Building 4, North section of the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), 1 Xiangheyuan Lu, Dongcheng District  
When: 3 pm  
Admission: 20 yuan  
Tel: 8438 8258 ext. 8008

### Nightlife

**Lantern Festival Night**

Where: Yugongyishan, 3-2 Zhangzizhong Lu, Dongcheng District  
When: 9 pm  
Admission: 50 yuan

Tel: 6404 2711



### Chris Corbett

Where: D-22, 242 Chengfu Lu, Haidian District  
When: 9 pm  
Admission: 30 yuan, 20 yuan for students  
Tel: 6265 3177



# Say goodbye to menstrual cramps

By Li Zhixin

Menstrual cramps plague women of all ages before and during their menstrual cycle.

Cramping, pulling and pain in the lower abdomen are common symptoms that can be eased with an over-the-counter pain reliever. But many women would prefer a natural remedy.

## Alternative, natural relief

### 1. Ginger Tea and Brown Sugar

Ginger tea and brown sugar are an ancient Chinese remedy for helping relieve the discomfort associated with a woman's menstrual cycle including mood swings and cramping.

"Ginger tea with brown sugar also helps the body rid itself of waste when menstruating. Drink ginger tea with brown sugar twice a day or anytime you begin feeling menstrual cramps," Xu Xin, a gynecologist at the Beijing Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine, said.

"The tea is all natural so there are no side effects," Xu said.

Chamomile tea and raspberry leaf tea can also be used to alleviate menstrual cramps.

### 2. Massage

Different massages can be used to ease and alleviate menstrual cramps and reduce Pre-Menstrual Syndrome (PMS). Shiatsu, acupressure and Maya abdominal massage are a few types of massages that are used to relieve and ease menstrual cramps in a natural way. Massage works the tense muscles into a relaxed state. Different massages will focus on different parts of the body including the back, neck and abdomen. It is best to speak with a massage practitioner and a doctor to find out which is right for you.

"Using acupressure along points of the body to relieve cramps helps circulation and muscular tension," Xu said.

She said there are a couple of points located on the body that when acupressure is applied will relieve menstrual cramps. One pressure point on the body is located on the inner legs right

above the ankle bones about one inch above the bone. Apply pressure for 20 seconds and release. Repeat until cramps are gone.

Another pressure point to help relieve menstrual cramps is between the webbing of the thumb and index finger. "Using your other hand, place your thumb along the bottom of the area and your pointer finger along the indentation between the thumb and index finger. Firmly squeeze the pressure point but not so that it hurts. Hold for 20 seconds and release," she said.

### 3. Exercise and Yoga

Exercise can help take the edge off of severe menstrual cramps. Walking, riding a bike or jogging are great exercises to keep women in shape, but they can also prevent menstrual cramping from becoming so bad that all you can do is curl up into a ball on the bed.

Yoga is another natural way to combat menstrual cramping. Different poses held for different lengths of time stretch the body, improve posture and release tension.

### 4. Orgasms

Having an orgasm with a partner or through self pleasure can help relieve menstrual cramps. During a woman's monthly cycle, the uterus contracts to expel blood that has built up along the uterine wall. These small contractions cause pain and discomfort during the first two to three days of the period.

"Try to orgasm when you have cramps. For some women the thought is nasty, but it does work. An orgasm will help relax the uterus and take away tension from the body. Cramps will begin

## Acupuncture may bring relief

In a review of 27 studies involving nearly 3,000 women, researchers from the Oriental Hospital at Kyung Hee University Medical Center in South Korea found that acupuncture may provide better relief than drugs or herbal medicines.

"There is convincing evidence of the effectiveness of using acupuncture to treat pain as it stimulates the production of endorphins and serotonin in the central nervous system," they wrote in a statement.

Endorphins are compounds produced naturally by the human body during exercise and excitement and they result in a feeling of well-being. Serotonin is a brain chemical.

"Compared with pharmacological treatment or herbal medicine, acupuncture was associated with a significant reduction in pain," they said in their paper, published in the latest issue of the *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*.

Acupuncture has been used as a form of anesthesia in China for at least 3,000 years

and experts believe it can clear blockages in circulation. The US National Institutes of Health has cited acupuncture as a possibly effective way of dealing with menstrual cramps.

The causes of many cases of menstrual cramps are unknown; for some women, the pain — accompanied by bloating, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, dizziness and headache — can become more severe with age.

For 10 percent of young women, the pains can be severe enough to keep them home from work, costing billions of dollars in lost wages and productivity annually.

to ease up or go away temporarily," she said.

### 5. Aromatherapy

Essential oils made from plants and herbs in massage oils or candles can be used for aromatherapy. Aromatherapy uses scent to stimulate the limbic system. The brain influences emotions and memory and can stimulate the adrenal and pituitary glands. When this part of the brain is influenced by aromatherapy it rebalances mood, hormones and stress levels. Aromatherapy, as a natural way to ease menstrual cramps, can be used in steam baths, compresses and in massages.

### 6. Abdominal Heating Pads

Use an abdominal heating pad to lessen or diminish menstrual cramps. Use the heating pad for two days for at least an hour a day.

## Treat menstrual cramps with nutrition

Women experiencing menstrual cramps may be willing to try almost anything to avoid cramps each month, but most women are not aware of the role nutrition plays in their well-being. Diet can affect the severity of women's menstrual cramps, the doctor said.

**1. Eat a varied diet.** Low-fat, high-fiber diets appear to combat the salty or sweet foods women typically crave during their menstrual cycle. "Besides helping avoid cravings, you'll also have more energy and a more stable mood," Xu said.

**2. Ensure your body is getting all the vitamins and minerals you need by taking**

**a multivitamin.** Minerals such as potassium, magnesium and calcium are particularly important before and during your monthly cycle.

**3. Eat more foods containing omega-3 fatty acids.** "Omega-3-rich foods like salmon, mackerel, albacore tuna, swordfish, lake trout, flaxseeds, walnuts, Brazil nuts and olive oil can help stabilize your mood and have an anti-inflammatory effect. They also reduce the effect of cramps because they block the production of prostaglandins," she said.

**4. Reduce the amount of salt you consume during your period rather than taking diuretics to avoid the bloat-**

**ing and swelling.** Alcohol will also cause you to retain water, so avoiding it during your period will help.

**5. Increase foods rich in thiamine.** Cooked lentils, long-grain brown rice, Brazil nuts, pecans, spinach, cantaloupe, milk and eggs are believed to help relieve cramping during menstruation.

**6. Eliminate trans-fatty acids, not only during your period, but for overall health.** Trans-fatty acids, found in commercially prepared pastries containing partially hydrogenated oils, may increase cramping. You may feel some relief from cramps if you can reduce or eliminate them.

CFP Photo





# Getting to know Peking Opera

By Zhang Dongya

Spring Festival, which ends with the Lantern Festival this Sunday, is a peak season for Peking Opera – a time when the spotlight shines on plays like *The Dragon and Phoenix*, *The Return of the Phoenix to the Nest* and *The Best Scholar's Matchmaking*.

The best way to learn about Peking Opera, a cultural treasure, is to watch a performance or to join a one-day Peking Opera tour, which includes a visit to the memorial of Mei Lanfang (1894-1961), one of the greatest Peking Opera performers. Visitors will also be taken backstage where performers rehearse, apply makeup and reveal secrets of the classic art.



Meilanfang Memorial

CFP Photo

## Four attractions

The Peking Opera tour was first offered last May by the China National Peking Opera Theater and Beijing Leader Travel Service. The package features four attractions: the Beijing Costume Factory, the Mei Lanfang Memorial, the China National Peking Opera Theater and a play at Changhe Yuan, a small experimental theater inside the China National Peking Opera Theater.

The first stop, the Beijing Costume Factory, is the country's biggest manufacturer of costumes and accessories for stage, film and television. Established 50 years ago, its products are still hand-made, using traditional techniques. Tourists will be taken to its workshop to see how Peking Opera costumes are made.

The Meilanfang Memorial, or the Former Residence of Mei Lanfang, is a courtyard home located on Huguosi Street, Xicheng District. Mei bought the yard in 1950 and spent the last 10 years of his life there. The house, which has been open to the public since 1986, showcases costumes and props that the opera star once used. It also displays Mei's calligraphic works, drawings and the souvenirs he collected.

The Memorial is currently closed for renovations, so the cost of this sightseeing trip will be deducted from the package.

Visitors stop for lunch on Huguosi, where they can sample local delicacies like noodle with soy bean paste and instant-boiled mutton.



A scene from the classic *Red Haired Galloping Horse* shown at the China National Peking Opera Theater. CFP Photo

## Experimental theater

The tour's highlight comes in the afternoon: a visit to the China National Peking Opera Theater, tantamount to a museum of Peking Opera. Some tour operators only visit this site to save time.

The Theater was founded in 1955 with Mei Lanfang as president. It is currently home to 300 performers in three troupes.

On the eighth floor is Changhe Yuan, a performance hall and the country's lone small experimental theater for Peking Opera. Unlike average theaters that seat 800, Changhe Yuan has only 216 seats, which are removable so that the stage area can be extended.

In ancient times, the rich invited troupes to perform in their private theaters located in their courtyards. Changhe Yuan was built just like these small, private theaters.

The hall has excellent acoustics; microphones are set up around the stage to guarantee full, rich sound. Peking Opera aficionados say Changhe Yuan's acoustics are the best in Beijing. The pillars inside are decorated with centuries-old hand-drawn patterns.

A stunt coordinator will demonstrate the use of some props and teach those who are interested in taking a turn with them.

Continued on page 21...



A stunt coordinator demonstrates to visitors the use of props.



The Peking Opera Costume Exhibition showcases dozens of life-size wax statues of opera characters. Photos by Sherry Wu



The Beijing Costume Factory produces hand-made costumes and accessories for the stage, using traditional techniques.

Photo provided by Beijing Leader Travel Service



Visitors could put on a costume and have their picture taken.



... continued from page 20

Peking Opera, a cultural treasure, has won many fans overseas.



## Trade secrets

On the seventh floor is the performers' rehearsal hall. According to an old saying, "One minute on stage requires 10 years of training backstage." This is visitors' chance to see what effort goes into creating flawless shows.

Visitors who make a reservation can ask performers to help them apply Peking Opera makeup, then they can put on a costume and have their picture taken. The makeup costs an extra 50 yuan and the costume 120 yuan.

The last stop is the Peking Opera Costume Exhibition on the fifth floor. The hall contains dozens of life-size wax statues of opera characters, including Zhuge Liang of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and Yu Ji of *Farewell My Concubine*. A guide will introduce each statue, including his or her special headdress and costume.

A nearby exhibition hall features props, costumes, headdresses and caps, including phoenix coronets. All the articles were

once used on stage. The most dazzling headdresses are those of Mei Lanfang.

The costumes and headdresses reflect the role and social strata of their character. For example, Sun Wukong, the Monkey in *Journey to the West*, wears *sa*, a type of shoes associated with monks and warriors. Shoes for emperors and officials have thick heels made from rough straw paper.

The room also contains a diorama of a real-life accident on stage. In the *Legend of White Snake*, the lead character Xu Xian stood too close to Bai Suzhen, played by Mei Lanfang. When Mei turned around, he hit Xu who fell off the platform. But the actors continued with the show as if nothing happened, wowing the audience and creating a theatrical legend.

The theater sells limited-edition figurines, which cost from 1,380 to 4,980 yuan. They are hand-made and have changeable clothes, just like Barbie dolls.



The National Peking Opera Theater sells limited-edition, hand-made figurines and costumes. Photo by Sherry Wu

## Watching classic Peking Opera

After a tour of the China National Peking Opera Theater, visitors get a chance to enjoy an opera performance in Changhe Yuan. The program varies per day, but includes classics such as *Divergence*, *Heavenly Divine Scattering* and the *Red Haired Galloping Horse*.

A play is usually two to three hours long. The dialogue text is displayed on screens located on both sides of the stage, but foreign attendees are advised to read the play's

summary before the show. Since a play can have different versions with a varying cast, sometimes the abridged version will end without a real ending.

Peking Opera has avid fans called *piaoyou*, who watch performances through telescopes so as not to miss a frown or a smile.

Audience members who would like to take pictures need to turn off their camera's flash to prevent from distracting the actors.



Visitors get a chance to see performers training in the rehearsal hall.



Performers preparing for a show backstage. CFP Photos



The National Peking Opera Theater contains a diorama of a real-life accident on stage.

Photo by Sherry Wu

## Travel information

### One-day Peking Opera tour

**Package A:** Visit to the Peking Opera Art Museum

**Admission:** 68 yuan (4-5 pm, Monday - Friday), 128 yuan (2-5 pm, weekends)

**Package B:** Visits to the Beijing Costume Factory, Mei Lanfang Memorial and Peking Opera Art Museum

**Admission:** 198 yuan (daily except Monday)

**Package C:** Visits to the Beijing Costume Factory, Mei Lanfang Memorial, Peking Opera Art Museum and watching a play in Changhe Yuan

**Admission:** 298 yuan (weekends)

**Travel Agency:** Beijing Leader Travel Service

**Tel:** 5129 9911

## Dining



### Havana lifestyles

Timeless Western dishes like fish and chips, Lomi Lomi salmon cocktails, steak sandwiches and Caesar salads and traditional Beijing dumplings are now available during lunch at Havana. Enjoy a cigar on a cozy sofa by the day's newspapers while sampling select coffees from Columbia, Sumatra and Kenya.

Where: Havana Bar, Grand Millennium Beijing, 7 Dongsanhuan Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District  
Tel: 6530 9383



### Beijing – London afternoon tea

With a selection of the best teas of China and those imported from the United Kingdom, Vous lobby lounge celebrates a ritual anchored in both countries' cultures and traditions.

Where: Sofitel Wanda Beijing, 93 Jianguo Lu, Chaoyang District

Cost: 158 yuan Beijing afternoon tea for two, includes a three-tier Chinese dessert and sweet selection; 158 yuan London afternoon tea for two, includes a three-tier English savories selection  
Tel: 8599 6666



### Pork knuckle promotion

Delight yourself every Thursday evening at Silk Road Trattoria Restaurant of The Great Wall Sher-

aton Hotel Beijing with German pork knuckles baked in a wood oven and served with sauerkraut and mashed potatoes prepared by German head chef Hans Juergen Gorsler. Includes a glass of draft beer.

Where: Silk Road Trattoria Restaurant, The Great Wall Sheraton Hotel Beijing, 10 Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District  
Tel: 6590 5566 ext. 2117



### Pleasures of Pu'er

Lobby Lounge greets spring with a selection of its best Pu'er teas, meant to be savored and enjoyed in its imperial palace-inspired surroundings to the accompaniment of live classical music. Guests can enjoy the rituals involved in the preparation and presentation of Pu'er tea produced from famed tea-growing provinces. Don't miss the delightful miniature pastries created by China World Hotel's award-winning team.

Where: Lobby Lounge, China World Hotel, 1 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District  
Tel: 6505 2266 ext. 37



### One East business lunch

This month, visit One East for a modern American lunch you'll never forget. Pay 100 yuan for a two-course set menu featuring the best contemporary American cuisine in Beijing. Add 30 yuan for a third course.

Where: One East, Hilton Beijing, 1 Dongfang Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 12 am – 2:30 pm, Monday – Friday  
Cost: 100 yuan, 130 yuan per person (15 percent surcharge)  
Tel: 5865 5030

### HOT POT :: PUNK

With special guest DJs from Paris, Germany, Japan, New York City and San Francisco, HOTPOT is already known as the top choice for non-commercial club music in Beijing. HOTPOT brings together an eclectic crowd united by the noble goals of "zoomma-zoom-zoom-ing" and having fun. Expect anything from Golden Era hip-hop to funk, soul and rock 'n' roll. Whether new wave, house or electro, HOTPOT is Beijing's best party for music lovers with world-class booty.

Where: Punk, The Opposite House, Building 1, 11 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District  
When: March 13  
Tel: 6410 5230



### Singapore Airlines adds cabin products on B777-200

Singapore Airlines will be introducing new cabin products on some of its Boeing 777-200 aircraft later this month. A total of 11 B777-200s will be refitted with the Airline's most recent cabin offerings to provide additional space, comfort and greater product consistency across the fleet. The refitted B777-200s will be configured with 38 Business Class and 228 Economy Class seats.

The first refitted B777-200 aircraft operated on the Singapore-Shanghai route February 23. As more B777-200s are refitted, selected flights to Beijing, Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, Hong Kong and Chennai will also be operated with these aircraft.

(By Sun Feng)

## Hotel

### Marco Polo Parkside Beijing gets new Japanese restaurant

Last month, Marco Polo Parkside Beijing opened Matsuko, a new Japanese restaurant. In order to celebrate the opening, all diners can enjoy a 20-percent discount on all food items with the exception of beverages, buffets and other discounted dishes before February 28. From March 1 to 31, each table of customers can get a complimentary chef-recommended dish.

Where: Matsuko, Marco Polo Parkside Beijing, 78 Anli Lu, Chaoyang District  
Tel: 5963 6663

### Awards, accolades boost Regent 2010 honors

The Regent Beijing continues its trailblazing streak of awards, bagging two prestigious awards and accolades at the beginning of 2010. In addition to being voted "World's Best Hotels" by readers of *Travel + Leisure*, it also made the World's Best Places to Stay Gold List of *Condé Nast Traveler* for three consecutive years, reaffirming its reputation as one of the best destinations in the world.



### Ayana world's top spa say Condé Nast readers

Thermes Marins Bali Spa was named the World's No. 1 Spa in the *Condé Nast Traveller Readers' Spa Awards 2010*, the latest accolade of this ayana Resort and Spa Bali since its rebranding. Set in beautiful tropical garden, Thermes Marins Bali is the only Thermes Marins spa in Southeast Asia. The facility incorporates spa villas, treatment rooms, beauty salons, a reflexology and relaxation lounge and has Spa on the Rocks treatment villas anchored on rocks amid the ocean.

### Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts in Chongqing

Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts recently signed an agreement with Chongqing Guest House to manage a hotel in Chongqing scheduled to open in late 2011. Designed by the East China Architectural Design Institute, the hotel will be located in the central business district. Contemporary yet classically styled, the hotel features the largest standard guest rooms in the city, the smallest of which is 45 square meters. The hotel will have a Chinese restaurant, specialty restaurant, lobby lounge and an all-day dining outlet, in addition to a spa and health club, swimming pool, lounge, hair salon and entertainment center.

## Event

## Aviation



## Chinglish story

This column focuses on Chinglish mistakes in our daily life. If you have any experiences to share, send them to Wang Yu at wangyu2008@ynet.com.

# The dog days are over



By Wang Yu

Teachers regularly warn their students to guard against using Chinglish because it can lead to miscommunication and embarrassing situations. But they forget that Chinglish mistakes can sometimes be fun as well.

I went to college in Nanjing, the capital of six ancient dynasties and a popular tourist attraction for its traditional architecture and culture. It is also notorious for scorching summers; from June to September, the city becomes so hot and humid that northerners like me feel as if we are melting.

In late summer of my senior year, a group of US students visited my school for a week. When we have native English speakers on campus, the administrators and teachers turn it into an opportunity to help Chinese students improve their English; thus, our guests' first activity was an "English corner," which paired up American and Chinese students for a chat.

I ended up sitting across from a

woman named Britney. Both of us were not good at talking with strangers, so we eventually joined Yu Qiang, a classmate who can rattle endlessly, and his language partner Carl. They were discussing Western pop music.

"I've been very busy the last few weeks. Too many papers and experiments to do before you can graduate," Yu said. "Once the dog days were over, I bought Marilyn Manson's new album."

"So you like him too? Interesting to discover he's got a lot of fans out here," Carl said.

"Yeah, the Chinese youth like American music," Yu laughed.

"But I don't think the dog days are over. The heat's still really bad," Carl said.

"No, my dog days are over. It was a very stressful time."

"Terribly hot," Carl said.

Britney leaned over and whispered to me, "There must be some misunderstanding. They're talking about two

entirely different things."

"Yeah, I think my classmate means 'gou rizi,' which means bad days," I said. "Gou is Chinese for dog and rizi for days."

"Ah, so he's saying 'dog days' to mean really bad days," she smiled.

"Do you know why the hottest days of summer are called dog days?" I had heard of the idiom but had no idea where it came from. I thought it was an interesting phrase.

Britney paused to think. "The ancient Romans came up with the term. They called dog days the summer months when Sirius, the so-called Dog Star, rose and set with the sun. Believing the star was the cause of the hot, sultry weather, the Romans sacrificed a brown dog to appease the rage of Sirius," Britney said.

"Wow, that's impressive," I said.

If Yu had not made the Chinglish mistake, I would not have known this tidbit. This is what I call a fun way to learn a language.

## Blacklist

This is a column of words or phrases commonly misused by Chinese speakers. If you're planning to be an English teacher, reporter or employee of a multinational company, then watch out for this page each week.

## 1. Despite how many artists are producing comics, the scene draws few readers.

**Professor Zhu Shida (ZS):** "Despite" means "in spite of," a preposition that can only be followed by a noun. For instance, The boys went for a walk despite the rain. However, modern English does take "despite" as a conjunction, for instance, Despite that they appealed repeatedly, he turned a deaf ear to them. You may just as well say: In spite of the fact that they have appealed repeatedly, he turned a deaf ear to them. It can only be followed by a straight narrative sentence. If you wish to apply the pattern of "how many," you will have to use the pattern of "no matter how many." So you will either have to say, Despite that many artists are producing comics, the scene draws few readers; or, No matter how many artists are producing comics, the scene draws few readers.

**Native speaker Steven Sandoz (SS):** The professor is correct. I also find the phrase "the scene draws few readers" to be a little awkward. A reader is one who reads written material, but a "scene" in this sense describes a group of people united by their shared interests. I understand the intent is to make them sound niche, but there are better ways to say this. One option is, "Despite the many artists producing comics, their works attract few readers."

## 2. Prices look to rise

**ZS:** There is nothing wrong with this sentence grammatically with the verb "to look." It is the same as with the verb "to seem." Prices seem to rise. However, as it serves as a double predicate, it is not a perfect sentence to express this idea. It would be better rhetorically to use the participle of the verb "to rise" as you know the action is usually under way or to happen in the future. So, it will be more idiomatic to say: Prices look to be rising. I'll give you another example: The financial scenario looks to be getting much better with some of the major economic bodies registering growth.

**SS:** I find this phrase a little ambiguous. Adding one more word would avoid the potential anthropomorphizing of "prices" with a verb whose first meaning requires eyes to perform. Perhaps "Prices look set to rise" would work better. If this is already happening, "Prices look to be rising" would be sufficient.

## 3. Growth rose 2.9 percent between the first and second quarters, the biggest jump in close four years.

**ZS:** I think you are here confused with the adverbial usage of "close" and "close to." The problem with this sentence lies in the usage of the adverb "close." When "close" is used adverbially, it means in a close manner, closely or near: The two farms lie close together. The end of the year is drawing close. However, if it is in the sense of "almost or nearly," it should be the phrase "close to." You wish to say "nearly four years," or "almost four years"? So, it is close to four years. To replace this idea into the sentence, it should be, Growth rose 2.9 percent between the first and second quarters, the biggest jump in close to four years. Here is another example: He is getting a salary of close to 5,000 yuan a month.

**SS:** It appears someone accidentally struck out the word "to" after close. It's too awkward of a grammar error to have been intentional.

## Chinglish on the way

This column aims to identify Chinglish in public areas. If you see any Chinglish signs, please send a picture of it to wangyu2008@ynet.com together with your name and address.

# From this come back

By Tiffany Tan

I was in grade school when a married aunt shared an important piece of information about men: they don't like asking for directions when they're driving. "They'd rather go around in circles than stop and ask for help," she said solemnly.

Well, I bet our sign this week will break even the toughest guy. The arrow tells you to go left while the words say, "come back." If you follow it, you're never going to get anywhere in a thousand years! Just reading it twice in a row gives

me a headache.

When I consulted my crystal ball, I was told that "from this come back" was a character-for-character translation of the Chinese words. What the sign meant was pretty simple: Exit (follow the arrow).

"This is probably a sign in some tourist spot, where there's a winding path to different sites and the entrance and exit are located separately," a Chinese colleague said.

I wonder if male tourists had a harder time getting out.





# new york, I love you (2009)

## Scene 1

(Ben, a thief, follows Molly to a bar and meets Garry, Molly's lover, whose wallet he just stole.)

**Ben (B):** I walk past your flower room every day. I see you, but I say nothing. I'm so afraid to look at you. Oh, girl. You say I'm the strongest. I say you're the kindest. You ask me where I'm going. I point to the ocean. Oh, girl.

**Garry (G):** Very touching.

**B:** Lyrics to this song.

**G:** Let me have a cigarette. Indian?

**Molly (M):** I think it's Japanese.

**B:** Chinese.

**G:** Chinese? Xie xie, wo cao, bukaopu ... "Thank you, I f--k, and you're **off key (1)**."

**M:** He found my phone for me.

**G:** Really? Very nice. Thank you. Gary. Nice to meet you.

**B:** Ben.

**G:** How are you, Benjamin?

**B:** Just Ben.

**G:** Thank you.

**B:** Nice to meet you. I'll leave you two alone.

**G:** Have a seat. Sit. Sit down. We know each other?

**B:** It's possible.

**G:** You look familiar.

**B:** New York's not such a big place.

**G:** You study? NYU?

**B:** I wish.

**G:** I teach there. Am I a good teacher?

**M:** You're a good teacher.

**G:** Thank you. So what do you do?

**B:** Thief. Could be.

**M:** That is funny.

**G:** Might be? Used to be? Will be? To be or not to be. Well, I'm a thief.

**M:** I've been trying to steal you from your wife, but it hasn't worked so far.

## Scene 2

(A writer meets a call girl on the street and gives her a light. He does not know what she does and wants to make some progress.)

**Writer (W):** That was kind of a powerful, intimate situation.

**Call girl (C):** What was intimate?

**W:** Just now. Just ... we ... sharing the flame. I mean, that was ... that was intimate.

**C:** If you say so.

**W:** Oh, come on now. You know what I'm talking about. Our hands almost touched. I looked at you, and you lifted your head up slowly and our eyes met. It was intense and it was intimate.

**C:** Wow. Stop it. I feel naked.

**W:** Yeah, well, you know what? I have that effect on women. I

mean, not on women. No, not all women. But it has happened before, so don't be alarmed.

**C:** Yeah, I bet.

**W:** Yeah. Don't ignore what's happening here. We're having some kind of powerful, weird **alchemy (2)** and you have to pay attention when that happens. This stuff is not to be treated lightly.

**C:** Listen, I actually just came out here to have a cigarette, OK? And relax and do my thing. So, uh, maybe another time.

**W:** Yeah. But there may be another time. OK? I may never get this chance again. I mean, we may never, you know, be able to return to this moment.

**C:** Well, then, you should know that I'm married and happy.

**W:** Right. Uh-huh. And where is he? He leaves you out here alone, in the dark, without a light. I'm not feeling that.

**C:** Well, he doesn't smoke, so ...

**W:** But you love him anyway.

**C:** Yeah. Why not?

**W:** Sure. Sure. He just abandons you, huh, to your mortal disease, and leaves you alone to suffer and die, when he's in there pretending to love you? I don't respect this guy. I think he's a coward. I think he's selfish. And forgive me for saying this, but I think any moment now, this guy's gonna open up his real self to

## Vocabulary

- 1. off key:** failing to hit the correct notes while singing
- 2. alchemy:** a seemingly magical power or process of transmuting
- 3. bold:** fearless and daring, courageous
- 4. turn someone on:** to spark sexual arousal

(By Wang Yu)

## Movie of the week

This movie is actually 10 short films, each segment around 10 minutes long. The shorts share a common theme: love. Each is about finding love whether it is in the chitchat of strangers or the life of a couple.

The bottom line is *New York, I Love You* does not add up. It remains the sum of its parts. The best being the segment about an old couple walking Brooklyn on their 67th wedding anniversary.

## Synopsis

There are 8 million stories in the New York, these are 10 of them.: a pickpocket meets his match; a young Hasidic woman reveals herself to an Indian businessman on the eve of her marriage; a writer tries a pick-up line; an artist seeks a model; a composer needs to read; two women connect; a man takes a child to Central Park; lovers meet; a couple takes a walk on their anniversary; a student goes to the prom with a girl in a wheelchair; and a retired singer contemplates suicide.

you, and it's gonna be scary stuff's gonna come out. You know, I felt it right away. I felt it right away that I think I'm gonna say something a little **bold (3)** here. But I think you might be married to the wrong person.

(The writer keeps talking.)

**C:** Are you an actor or something? Or a comedian? You're a comedian.

**W:** No. I, uh ... I'm kind of a writer.

**C:** Oh, you're kind of a writer.

**W:** Yeah, kind of. You know, what about you? What do you do?

**C:** I'm a hooker.

**W:** (Stammering, laughing) What exactly does that mean?

**C:** That exactly means that people pay to have sex with me. Here's my card. It's got my number and my website on it.

**W:** So wow. You're, uh ... That's why you're ...

**C:** Fridays is no good. Saturdays and Sunday are busy. You know, I look forward to hearing from you and sharing another ... intimate moment.

(The woman leaves)

**W:** Well, f--k me.

## Scene 3

(Outside a restaurant, a tired couple talk with each other as strangers.)

**Wife (W):** You know what? As soon

as I finish this cigarette, I have to walk back into that restaurant and sit down again in front of my husband.

**Husband (H):** And?

**W:** And he won't look at me. And he won't notice I'm not wearing a bra under my dress.

**H:** No bra?

**W:** No panties, either.

**H:** Oh. No underwear?

**W:** Not today.

**H:** I feel sad for this poor, lonely husband who can't see his wife's hidden talents.

**W:** Don't you think he's like every man, though? He's typically blind and bored by his very own wife, ready to fantasize about the first unknown woman he hasn't f--ked yet. Am I bothering you?

**H:** Not at all.

**W:** Yeah. And you say that because now I've **turned you on (4)**, right? You want to take me to bed. Do you want to take me to bed?

**H:** Yeah, I probably do.

(The man tries to kiss the woman, but the woman refuses.)

**H:** Aw, come on. All right, why are you telling me all of this?

**W:** Because tonight I want things to change.